

## The Muse at Play

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# The Muse at Play

## Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry

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## Preface

The essays collected in this volume are the fruit of a conference “ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ. Greek and Latin *Technopaegnia*, Riddles, Acrostichs, Poetic Puns, Metrical Curiosities, etc.”, held in May 2011 by the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of Warsaw. There were good reasons for organising such a conference at this time. In recent decades there has been a noticeable growth of interest in the obscure and the playful in ancient poetry. However, in 2009, when our conference was first conceived, this broad range of topics had not yet received an up-to-date, more comprehensive treatment. Obviously, the appetite for such a treatment, at least the appetite of the Hellenists, was fed when the monograph *Technopaegnia: Formspiele in der griechischen Dichtung* was published in 2010 by Christine Luz, incidentally (or not so incidentally), one of the contributors to the present volume. Yet after *primi piatti* there is always place for *secondi*, and even for *dolci*. Our hope is that the present volume may be not only nourishing, but also capable of stimulating the appetite for even further pursuits in the spacious field we now enter.

Besides those συμπαιζόντες who presented papers at the conference, we would like to thank others who greatly contributed to the unique character, friendly atmosphere and, we will risk saying, overall success of the scholarly event out of which the present volume grows: Tomasz Derda, Emily Gowers, Joshua Katz, Margaret Malamud and Martha Malamud were skillful κορυφαίοι of the conference sessions; Silvio Bär, Julia Doroszewska and Adam Łajtar showed no less skill in their role of formal respondents; a team of members of research staff and PhD students from Warsaw were of immense help at various stages of organising the whole event. Finally, we are delightedly grateful to Joshua Katz for agreeing to contribute the introductory piece, whose smallest merit is that it enables us to keep these remarks as brief as they are.

The Greek font used in this volume is IFAOGrec Unicode, developed by the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology in Cairo.

Warsaw and Nashville,  
August 2012

Jan Kwapisz, David Petrain,  
Mikołaj Szymański



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## The Muse at Play: An Introduction\*

Joshua T. Katz

The opening day of the conference on wordplay whose proceedings are collected in this volume was held in the lovely ballroom on the first (in American terms, second) floor of the Tyszkiewicz-Potocki Palace in Warsaw. Taped to the wall at the bottom of the staircase was a poster that entreated all who beheld it to “Polish your Polish!” As far as I know, none of the foreigners who took part in ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ rose to the challenge of learning to say, quickly, *W Szczecbrzeszynie chrząszcz brzmi w trzcinie*<sup>1</sup> (“In [the town of] Szczecbrzeszyn a beetle buzzes in the reeds”) – the first line of Jan Brzechwa’s tongue-twisting poem “Chrząszcz” (“Beetle”)<sup>2</sup> – but if we did not exactly heed the heteronymic imperative, its words were still a reminder of the sometimes childlike (cf. παῖς “child”, whence the

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\* I am grateful to the editors for the invitation to write this introduction, whose attention to Hesiod, acrostics, and linguistics reflects some of my own main interests in and around wordplay – interests that the talks at the conference and papers in the present volume have happily expanded. Seeing little need for repetition, I have for the most part avoided referring to secondary literature that the authors of the papers themselves cite. The lively students in Lee Behnke’s class on Vergil at Phillips Exeter Academy in February 2011 were the first to hear about and react to the acrostic in *Aen.* 6 that I report here. My thanks for financial support go to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the Loeb Classical Library Foundation.

1 I.e., [fʃtʃɛbzɛʃɪnɛ xʂɔũʃtʃ bʒmi ftʃɛjnɛ] (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chrząszcz>, accessed August 2012).

2 The entry for “Language ... Most Unpronounceable” in the 13<sup>th</sup> British edition (1966) of *The Guinness Book of Records* reads as follows: “Among the most unpronounceable words to an English-speaking person is the Polish word for a may bug – *chrzaszcz* [*sic*]. This rhymes, as one U.S. reviewer said, with *thraszcz*” (McWhirter and McWhirter 1966: 133). By the 1970s, however, when I was a child, the entry was gone, at least in the American edition of what was at that point called *Guinness Book of World Records*, and replaced by “Worst Tongue-Twisters”, in which Polish was passed over in favor of *The sixth sick sheik’s sixth sheep’s sick* and phrases in Xhosa and Czech.

denominative verb παίζω “play”) pleasure people take, and have always taken, in verbal amusement. Over the course of three congenial and productive days we took seriously – but never too seriously – the ludic possibilities of Greek and Latin, moving from the two precursors of “anacyclic procedure” and the lone “rhopalic” verse in the *Iliad*, noted respectively by Krystyna Bartol and Jan Kwapisz, to the Neo-Latin *technopaegnia* of the Polish Renaissance and Baroque, which deserve to be widely known and now will be, thanks to Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska. The result is *The Muse at Play*.

The Muses are playful already at the beginning of Greek literature, entering Hesiod’s *Theogony* dancing: ὀρχεῦνται (“they dance”; 4) and χοροὺς ἐνεποιήσαντο (“they make their dances”; 7), πόσσ’/ποσσίν (“on/with their feet”; 3 and 8). While dance is an important form of play (cf., e.g., [Hes.] Sc. 277, with LSJ s.v. παίζω I.2), the focus in the following pages is not on Μοῦσα πεζή<sup>3</sup> but rather on verbal effects, which are likewise prominent. Just a few verses further along in the *Theogony*, for example, come the Muses’ celebrated riddling words about lies and truth (26–28)<sup>4</sup>; and as for Hesiod’s other major poem, the *Works and Days*, its proem is demarcated by the phonetic ring from the first word of verse 1 to the last word of verse 10, Μοῦσαι ... μῦθησαίμην (“the Muses ... I [sc. the poet Hesiod] would speak”). These are, to be sure, different kinds of play and they work on different textual levels – the anagrammatic ring is an artifice of the poet, the so-called *Dichterweihe* is introduced by the enigmatic speech of the Muses – but in each case there is a purpose beyond idle fun, namely to strengthen the link between the source and recipient of divine inspiration by insisting on characteristics that they have in common. In the one, Μοῦσαι is in effect etymologized by the first-person singular verb;<sup>5</sup> in the

3 With apologies to Kirk Freudenburg and Llewelyn Morgan: see Katz 2011 (opening paragraph).

4 “Ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον, | ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὅμοια, | ἴδμεν δ’ εὖτ’ ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι” (“‘Shepherds who dwell in the fields, worthy of reproach, mere bellies! We know to tell many lies similar to real things; we also know to speak the truth, if we want to’”). Heiden (2007) provides a novel analysis of verse 27, which he calls a “riddling paradox” (153); for the Muses’ words as a “riddle”, see also Pratt 1993: 110–112, as well as Stoddard 2004: 85–87.

5 Compare the analysis of Watkins (1995: 98–101), who speaks of “the hidden phonetic and semantic ring which frames the entire proem” and refers to μῦθησαι as “a Saussurian hypogram” of Μοῦσαι (101). On Ferdinand de Saussure’s interest in anagrams and hypograms, see Katz 2009: 90–98 and *passim* and Forthcoming, with the references cited therein, to which add most prominently Joseph 2012: 487–489, 522–526, and 555–558, with notes on 721, 726, and 729; see also Cusset and Kolde’s paper.



other, the Muses arguably toy with Hesiod by depicting him as a mere mouthpiece of their μῦθος (cf. *Theog.* 24<sup>6</sup>).<sup>7</sup> Evidently, Μοῦσα ποιεῖ and μεμύσεται ποιητής.

An introduction to a set of papers on verbal games in ancient Greece and Rome is perhaps not the place to try to define more generally across time and space the term “wordplay”, which is loosely used to refer to anagrams and riddles and all sorts of other things, from knock-knock jokes to Scrabble and from Lewis Carroll’s “word ladders” to entirely *e-less* novels. “Play” itself is a difficult concept to pin down, so it is hardly surprising that it not easy to decide what does and does not belong in, or at least what counts as the heart of, the subcategory “wordplay”, which I have proposed elsewhere not only involves some degree of self-reflexivity, pointing in its very form to its status as language, but actually elevates form to the point of content and sometimes even beyond.<sup>8</sup> Countless books, both high- and lowbrow, provide examples of wordplay to pass the time, and much has been written on the cultural contexts in which certain specific *jeux de mots* are played and ludic literature is produced; but we await the correspondent, specifically for verbal delights, to Johan Huizinga’s *Homo ludens*.<sup>9</sup> Still, it is clear that what makes Μοῦσαι ... μῦθησαίμην an instance of wordplay is in the first place phonetic (and orthographic), while ἴδμεν ψεύδεα ... ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι might be said to count as wordplay in view of its semantics. What they have in common – and what, I suggest, all instances of wordplay have in common – is that they toy with the boundaries of language, skating along its periphery without, crucially, quite going beyond (into the realm of nonsense or gibberish<sup>10</sup>). Wordplay is thus *extreme language* – with some examples naturally more extreme than others.<sup>11</sup>

6 See above all Lincoln 1997: 358–361 and *passim* (reprinted in Lincoln 1999: 14–17, with notes on 222–223).

7 I maintain my belief in the essential correctness, or at least viability, of the interpretation of *Theog.* 26–28 advanced in Katz and Volk 2000. Reactions of other scholars have ranged from sympathetic (e.g., Lincoln 2007: 213 [reprinted in Lincoln 2012: 66–67, with notes on 170–171] and Johnston 2008: 140–141) to mildly doubtful (López-Ruiz 2010: 77–78, with notes on 228) to more than mildly doubtful (Bettini 2008: 360 n. 75) to downright disbelieving (Furley 2004: 68–69 and *passim*).

8 Compare Katz 2009: 100–101. See also Luz 2010: xiii–xxi.

9 Huizinga 1949 (Dutch original 1938). The only paper in the present volume to cite *Homo ludens* is that of Naerebout and Beerden. For now, Crystal 1998 – written for a popular audience and not theoretical – is the best English-language introduction to wordplay.

10 A sizable body of literary (as well as historical and socio-anthropological) scholarship exists on nonsense, with the term understood as heavily overlapping with “wordplay” and referring to the genre of such things as the works of Edward Lear

The most seemingly straightforward example of extreme language in a literary context is probably the acrostic. Unsurprisingly, Christine Luz

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and Lewis Carroll. (I have learned the most about literary nonsense from Susan Stewart 1979, Tigges 1988, and Malcolm 1997.) This is perfectly reasonable, but with my linguistic hat on, I prefer to think of nonsense as true “non-sense” and I advocate paying more attention to the line between borderline sense (which is definitely still in the purview of linguistics) and no sense (which may not be). Here are two examples, one phonotactic and the other semantico-syntactic, of what I mean about play with words vs nonsense. (1) Consider the following three sequences of the same four letters in English: *elks*, *elsk*, and *slke*. The first makes sense, referring (along with the invariant plural *elk*) to a multiplicity of moose or moose-like creatures; the second does not make sense (in English; in Danish, it’s the imperative meaning “love!”), but it *could* make sense, it *could* appear as a zany nonce word in Dr. Seuss; while the third truly is nonsense (again, from the perspective of English). And (2) consider Noam Chomsky’s sentence *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* and its relationship to *Furiously sleep ideas green colorless*, a matter about which Chomsky (1957: 15–16) famously wrote the following: “[T]he notion of ‘grammatical’ cannot be identified with ‘meaningful’ or ‘significant’ in any semantic sense. [These two s]entences ... are equally nonsensical, but any speaker of English will recognize that only the former is grammatical. ... [T]he notion ‘grammatical in English’ cannot be identified in any way with the notion ‘high order of statistical approximation to English.’ It is fair to assume that neither sentence ... (nor indeed any part of these sentences) has ever occurred in an English discourse. Hence, in any statistical model for grammaticality, these sentences will be ruled out on identical grounds as equally ‘remote’ from English”. In fact, however, they are *not* “equally nonsensical” or “equally ‘remote’” from English: *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* is conventionally “grammatical” (most linguists would now say “acceptable”), and John Hollander had no trouble using it in his poem “Coiled Alizarine”, dedicated to Chomsky (J. Hollander 1971: 42); by contrast, actually examining statistics leads inexorably to the conclusion that *Furiously sleep ideas green colorless* is 200,000 times less likely (!) than its counterpart to appear in an English corpus (see Pereira 2000 and [lightly revised] 2002). Put another way, *elsk* and *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* are examples of language’s merry play with constraints; *slke* and *Furiously sleep ideas green colorless*, however, are not matters of true linguistic concern.

- 11 If I were writing my programmatic piece “Wordplay” (Katz 2009) now, I would put certain things slightly differently. One idea to consider on another occasion is that the essence of wordplay – the core of language’s periphery – lies in the combination of two of Roman Jakobson’s six functions of language (see Jakobson 1960, a landmark paper reprinted most prominently in Jakobson 1981: 18–51), namely the “poetic” and the “metalingual”. To Jakobson, these two functions are diametrically opposed (see Jakobson 1960: 358 and 1981: 27), and it does not seem reasonable to suppose that all examples of wordplay can easily count as poetry (cf., e.g., *This sentence has eight syllables*). Nevertheless, in wordplay, the linguistic manipulations are *themselves* (at least part of) the point, and it is a point that the manipulations *themselves* in many cases so artistically work to convey. Porter 2011 is an excellent recent paper on Greek that makes use of Jakobson’s functions and has much to say about alphabetic matters connected to wordplay.

opens her recent book on Greek wordplay with a long chapter on this device.<sup>12</sup> In fact, it is Latin acrostics that have been especially prominent in recent scholarship, with a remarkable number of papers either reporting the “discovery” of new instances<sup>13</sup> or refining our understanding of old ones, often by putting them into the shared Greco-Roman context dominated by the Hellenistic poet Aratus, whose verbal games, above all the gamma-acrostic Λ(επτή)-Ε-Π-Τ-Η (*Phaen.* 783–787), were apparently the lodestar in antiquity and have re-emerged forcefully in the past half-century.<sup>14</sup> Vergil’s peculiar skipped-line acrostic MA-VE-PV (i.e., Publius Vergilius Maro – backwards [!]), which has been spotted in *Georgics* 1.429–433 and is widely (though certainly not universally) deemed a significant nod to Aratus, has proved particularly fascinating.<sup>15</sup>

Acrostics are *seemingly* straightforward,<sup>16</sup> but the existence of C-A-C-A-T-A (“shitty”) in *Eclogue* 4.47–52 will suffice to show that accidents happen. It was noted over a century ago by Isidor Hilberg, in one of his

12 Luz 2010: 1–77; see also “Anhang I: Liste der griechischen Akrosticha” (375–376).

13 Sometimes “rediscovery”, if one counts their mention in work from over a century ago by Isidor Hilberg, on which see below in the text, with n. 17. Examples since 2006 (i.e., from five years prior to ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ) include the following: Bielsa (i) Mialet 2006 and 2010 (both wide-ranging), Hurka 2006 (Cicero, *Aratea*), La Barbera 2006 (Ovid and Claudian), Katz 2007 (Vergil, *Aeneid*), Castelletti 2008 and 2012b (Valerius Flaccus; the latter paper reports what “would be the only example of a Greek word used in acrostic within a Latin poem” [320]) and 2012a (Vergil, *Aeneid*; proposes that the *Aeneid* opens with an exceptionally elaborate acrostic-cum-telestich in addition to reporting another acrostic-cum-telestich near the start of Aratus), Gore and Kershaw 2008 (Apuleius), and Grishin 2008 (Vergil, *Eclogues*), as well as Colborn Forthcoming (Manilius; demonstrates on the basis of an acrostic that Manilius composed Book 1 of the *Astronomica* after Germanicus’ *Aratea*). See also Katz 2008 (Vergil, *Georgics*; discusses acrostics but is in the first place about another form of wordplay).

14 Recent contributions to the study of Aratean wordplay and its influence include Tsantsanoglou 2009 and Volk 2010: 205–208 and 2012, as well as Claus 2006: 167–172 and *passim*, Selina Stewart 2008: 595 and *passim*, and Katz 2009. See also the references in the next footnote and in n. 18.

15 The most recent attempt to explain some of the peculiarities of MA-VE-PV – Why the skipped lines? Why the reversal of the names? – is Somerville 2010; note also Katz 2008: 108, with n. 4, and esp. 115–116, with 116 n. 1. (More generally on MA-VE-PV and other verbal games in Vergil, see now Nelis 2010b: 20–23, as well as Smith 2011: 16–19, with notes on 25. I note that Smith’s book opens with the sentence, “Virgil wrote in code” [1], by which the author means a number of things, including wordplay.) Selina Stewart (2010) reports a new Greek acrostic in Apollonius of Rhodes, which she connects back to Aratus and also forward to Vergil; for the latest Aratean find and its proposed connection to Vergil, see Castelletti 2012a (details in n. 13 above).

16 At least in principle, but note MA-VE-PV.

two papers devoted to listing unintended acrostics in Latin poetry,<sup>17</sup> and indeed many discoveries may instead be inventions – fantasies – of overheated scholarly minds, both past and present.<sup>18</sup> As far as present minds are concerned, and to stick with Vergil, I expect that most colleagues will accept Alexei A. Grishin's V-N-D-I-S (*Ecl.* 9.34–38) as a real – that is, intentional – acrostic; James J. Clauss's F-O-N-S (*Ecl.* 1.5–8), about which I admit to having had feelings of skepticism, is doing well in the court of opinion; and my own FRO(-Ø)-MI-AC (*Aen.* 4.399–402; ~ *formicae* ["ants"; 402]) is probably not destined for greatness.<sup>19</sup> It is striking that a number of articles about Greco-Roman acrostics have a question mark in the title,<sup>20</sup> one of which, D. P. Fowler's acclaimed one-paragraph note on M-A-R-S (*Aen.* 7.601–604), ends with the infamous prediction, "I await the men in white coats".<sup>21</sup> Under such circumstances, it perhaps not surprising that the call for papers for ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ contained the following sentence: "We do not encourage searching for unnoticed puns, acrostichs, anagrams, and other mirages".

How, after all, is one to evaluate the importance for our understanding of Vergil of A-B-E-O-O-S-O-S in *Aeneid* 6.77–84? At first glance, this sequence, though indisputably there in the text, is not promising: *abeo os os*,

17 Hilberg 1899 and 1900 (C-A-C-A-T-A noted in 1899: 303; see also now Danielewicz 2005: 324), of which it has been said, "In any competition for monuments of wasted labour the collection of accidental acrostics in Latin poets published by I. Hilberg would stand a good chance of a prize" (Fowler 1983; footnote omitted).

18 Overheated scholarly minds of the past include many in the Hellenistic age, of course, and we can be grateful for them. If Aratus had not noticed Homer's presumably accidental acrostic Λ-E-Y-K-H (*Il.* 24.1–5) and if he had not connected it to the phonetically and orthographically similar aesthetic buzzword λεπτή, he might not have put Λ-E-II-T-H into his poem; and if he had not done this, the history of classical wordplay would be very different. Compare above all Korenjak 2009, with good arguments for thinking that Λ-E-Y-K-H might well have been perceived by an ancient reader as an intentional move on Homer's part; see also Damschen 2004: 104–106, though the belief that the actual intentionality of Λ-E-Y-K-H deserves greater consideration is unlikely to prove popular.

19 See Grishin 2008, Clauss 1997, and Katz 2007. Castelletti 2012a – at the time of writing, the latest paper to appear on elaborate Vergilian wordplay – embraces and expands on Clauss's F-O-N-S.

20 Examples include Fowler 1983, Clauss 1997, and also Feeney and Nelis 2005; note Morgan 1993 as well. I do not notice a correlation between the author's choice to put in a question mark and the proposal's receiving scoffs from others – or between the lack of a question mark and its wide acceptance. Other titularly questioning instances of wordplay are Bing 1990 (whose proposal has received clear approval) and Calder 2004 (not likely to carry the day), as well as Dettmer 1988, Hendry 1994, and Nelis 2010a; see also Koster 1988: 97–115.

21 Fowler 1983.

if Latin, could be said to mean “I go away; mouth, mouth” or “I – a mouth, a mouth – go away” or perhaps (with *OLD* s.v. *abeō* 11a “To change or be transformed into, become; to degenerate into, disappear into”) “I am transformed: a mouth, a mouth”.<sup>22</sup> Latin or Pig Latin? But if there is one place in the *Aeneid* where one might positively expect to find an acrostic, it is here, in the description of Aeneas’ encounter in her cave with the Sibyl (6.42–155), who communicates her prophecies in two ways: on the one hand orally, inspired by the god Apollo (not unlike the way the Muses claim to possess Hesiod at the start of the *Theogony*), and on the other hand in writing, on neatly arranged leaves that, however, the wind, rushing in when the doors of her cave are opened, is liable to scatter so that the messages become enigmatic (cf. already *Aen.* 3.441–457). This second mode would appear to be connected to acrostics: the only verbatim testimony we have from the so-called Sibylline Books (on which see immediately below, with n. 27) comes in the form of two precious lacunose oracles preserved in the paradoxographical *Book of Wonders* of Hadrian’s freedman Phlegon of Tralles (*FGrH* 257 F 36 X), each of them structured as an acrostic and the second presenting a Sibyl who speaks of the prophecies ἐν πετάλοισιν ἑμοῖς (“on my leaves”; 65).<sup>23</sup> It is no great leap to suggest that the prophetic words of one or more Sibyls – including very likely the Erythraean one,<sup>24</sup> whom Vergil in an Italicizing move elides with his Sibyl, that of Cumae<sup>25</sup> – were written on leaves arranged so that the first

22 Naturally, Hilberg (1899: 270) notes A-B-E-O.

23 The *locus classicus* is Diels 1890, with discussion of acrostics on pp. 25–37. It was Diels who determined that Phlegon’s text actually consists of two oracles that were produced separately in the final years of the Second Punic War and promulgated by the *decemviri* only decades later, in 125 BC; see Satterfield 2011 for the latest account of the work in its historical context (118, with n. 5, on the acrostic). Hansen (1996: 40–43 and 126–137) provides an English translation and helpful commentary.

24 Varro tells us (*fide* Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.6) that the oracles extant in Rome after the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline burned down in 83 BC come from a number of sites, including Erythrae (“die Mutterstadt der Sibylle”, according to Diels 1890: 25), and that genuine oracles take the form of acrostics. There is no evidence that the Sibyl of Phlegon’s *Book of Wonders* is or is not from Erythrae, but the Sibyl of his work *On Long-Lived Persons* (*FGrH* 257 F 37) is explicitly Erythraean (99) and the oracle that Phlegon transmits there may contain a significant acrostic as well (see Diels 1890: 15 and also Hansen 1996: 186–187).

25 Vergil’s Sibyl is often said to be an amalgam of three Sibyls: Cumaean, Cimmerian, and Trojan (see Waszink 1948: 57 and *passim* [reprinted in Waszink 1979: 161], followed by Gowers [2005: 170 and 174]). But she is plausibly Erythraean, too. Indeed, Jan Kwapisz calls my attention to [Arist.] *Mir. ausc.* 838a and Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 6.321, which show that some ancients considered it possible that the Cumaean Sibyl was a native of Erythrae, i.e., that these two Sibyls were one and

letters themselves form a word or sentence. Indeed, the (Greek) word ἀκροστιχίς is first attested in a Roman treatise by a contemporary of Vergil, Cicero's *De divinatione*, where it is used of Ennian verses (2.111) and then, immediately afterward, applied to the Sibylline Books (2.112). Not incidentally, a pair of classicists have recently refined the interpretation of the Ciceronian passage in connection with their discovery of a gamma-acrostic (M(ontis)-O-N-S) in the oracle of Apollo in Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 4.33.<sup>26</sup>

A couple of paragraphs in an essay of this kind cannot begin to do justice to such complicated and bibliographically trodden matters as the relationships among the various Sibyls in antiquity and the reality of acrostics in the Sibylline Books and the Sibylline Oracles.<sup>27</sup> Nor can they do justice to the complexities of Vergil's poetry.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, it is notable that *Aeneid* 6.77, the start of the would-be acrostic, not only begins the description of the Sibyl's Apolline ecstasy (77–80) but immediately follows an allusion to the Sibylline Books by Aeneas (71–74), who then recalls the seer Helenus' earlier instruction that he entreat the priestess to use her *ora* (3.457) to pronounce her *oracula* (3.456) rather than consign her words to leaves: [“]foliis tantum ne carmina manda, | ne turbata volent rapidis ludibria ventis; | ipsa canas oro.”] *finem dedit ore loquendi* (“Only do not entrust your songs to leaves, lest they fly about in confusion, a plaything for the swift winds; I implore you, sing yourself”. His mouth put an end to speech”; 6.74–76).<sup>29</sup> This would make it possible to interpret *abeo* (“I am transformed, I degenerate”) as the Sibyl's sly indication to the careful lis-

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the same. In addition, St Augustine records and comments on a prophetic Christian acrostic of the Erythraean Sibyl – *sive, ut quidam magis credunt, Cumaeva* (“unless, as some prefer to believe, she is Cumaean”; *De civ. D.* 18.23); R. Hollander (2007) follows an interesting thread from Vergil's Sibyl and Augustine's testimony to the description of the Sibyl's leaves at the end of Dante's *Paradiso* (33.65–66).

26 Gore and Kershaw 2008.

27 On Sibyls and the Sibylline tradition in general, see, e.g., Parke 1988 and Potter 1994: 58–97, with notes on 234–243, and *passim*, as well as the brief papers collected in Bouquet and Morzadec 2004. On the Sibylline Books, with comments on the relationship between acrostics in the Books and the Oracles, see now Satterfield 2008 and 2011; see also Luz 2010: 29–33. The latest and most impressive large-scale work on the Oracles is Lightfoot 2007.

28 The standard commentaries on *Aen.* 6 (Norden 1957 and Austin 1977) are silent on the mouthy matters of concern in this paragraph. As for the Sibyl's leaves, though, see Norden 1957: 143: “Ob Vergil die Losorakel auf Palmblättern noch gesehen hat oder sie nur aus Varros antiquitates kennt, die Servius zu [6.] 74 und 3, 444 dafür zitiert, läßt sich nicht sicher entscheiden”; see also Horsfall 2006: 327.

29 On these verses in the wider Sibylline context, see Eitrem 1945: 108–113.

tener or reader that she is no longer in control of her faculties<sup>30</sup> – and yet still up to her old tricks (cf. *ambages* [99], here perhaps best translated as “riddles, enigmas”).<sup>31</sup> And as for *os os* (“a mouth, a mouth”), the same careful listener or reader will have noticed *oro ... ore* at 76, as well as verse-initial *os* at 80 (the first letter is the O in A-B-E-O) and verse-initial *ostia* at 81 (the first letter is the O in the first O-S: so, a minimal gamma-acrostic). Furthermore, forms of *os*, *oris* (“mouth”), *ostium* (“entrance, door; mouth”), and *orare* (“speak” < \**osare*, literally “to mouth”) are conspicuous throughout Vergil’s account of the Sibyl, describing her body and her echoey cave, besides being used of Aeneas.<sup>32</sup> The abundance of

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- 30 Aeneas’ encounter with Helenus in *Aen.* 3 is of course directly connected to the passage under discussion, and Damien Nelis suggests to me that A-B-E-O could in some sense pick up on *abeunt* at 3.452 (and *adeas* at 3.456). Alternatively, perhaps we should understand A-B E-O (“from him [sc. Apollo]”) — an excellent idea of Jerzy Danielewicz, who kindly read a near-final draft of this introduction.
- 31 Oliensis (2004: 39–40), cautiously suggesting that the Sibyl may prefer to write on leaves rather than speak, writes as follows: “Unlike the isolate leaves that carry her prophecy piecemeal, her oracular pronouncements can be trusted to issue from her oral orifice in a continuous and orderly procession” (40) — a neat turn of phrase that may apply vertically as well as horizontally. Michèle Lowrie’s recent book on the relationship between writing and song in Augustan poetry opens with Vergil’s Sibyl (Lowrie 2009: 2–6): “Even [in *Aen.* 6.77–82 + 98–103], perhaps the most phonologocentric passage of Latin literature, song is not the be-all and end-all of communication”, she writes, and “[w]ith few exceptions, Vergil ... comments [only] indirectly on the relative validity of song and writing through the passages on the Sibyl” (4). To this I would add that there is an interesting tension here between inspired poet and inspired prophetess: it is Vergil who is the authorial force behind the visible, written acrostic, which the Sibyl, because she is speaking when “she would much rather do her job via writing” (Lowrie 2009: 5), is not quite in a position to produce herself.
- 32 See Gowers 2005: 179–181 and *passim* on the proliferation of mouths in Vergil’s Underworld and the relationship of these oral cavities to the Sibyl’s many-mouthed pronouncements; see also Monti 1994: 25–26 and *passim* and Oliensis 2004: 41–42 and *passim*. For the repetition *os os*, compare Monti 1994: 26, with n. 29, in a discussion of the “phonostylistics” of the verses that describe the cave’s echoing passages. Oliensis’s paper, on “Sibylline syllables”, describes cases throughout the *Aeneid* when disorder arises from the opening of (e.g.) a mouth or door. Notably, the classic instance of this motif is the opening of the Gates of War in Book 7, an Ennian passage that Oliensis discusses on pp. 36–39. She points out that Ennius’ description of the same subject (*Ann.* 225–226 Skutsch) is taken up by Horace in his atomistic treatment of order and disorder (cf. *disiecti membra poetae* [“limbs of a scattered poet”]; *Sat.* 1.4.62) — but does not explicitly note that Vergil’s account happens to begin with the most widely recognized acrostic in the poem (M-A-R-S in 7.601–604, noted above in the text; see Fowler 1983 and the further literature cited in Katz 2007: 77 n. 2) or that this acrostic may in turn be an allusion to an Ennian acronym (see Hendry 1994; see also above in the text on Cic. *Div.* 2.111). Since the acrostic I suggest in Book 6 also begins a section in which doors and

mouths is apparent from the following list: 43 *ostia*, 53 *ora*, 76 *oro*, 76 *ore*, 80 *os*, 81 *ostia*, 92 *oraveris*, 102 *ora*, 106 *oro*, 108 *ora*, 109 *ostia*, 116 *orans*, 124 *orabat*, and 155 *ore* (the final word of the section).<sup>33</sup> So could Vergil with A-B-E-O(s) O(*stia*)-S O-S be deliberately adding to the count of the oracular Sibyl's proverbial hundred mouths – *centum*, *ostia centum* (43) and *ostia ... centum* (81), as well as *oraque centum* (625) – and thus interjecting a further twist into what Emily Gowers, in her unpacking of Vergil's Sibylline poetics, has identified as the humorous originality here of “the ‘many mouths’ cliché”?<sup>34</sup>

Some readers will be shaking their heads in disbelief. (Perhaps others will be nodding.) And this means that it is high time for me to abandon my hobbyhorse and properly introduce the eighteen papers, whose focus on fundamentals – on what we actually know about classical wordplay, from both the emic and the etic point of view – shows off some of the finest features of ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ: the de-emphasis on the “gee-whiz” factor and the attention to wordplay off the learned page and outside the most recherché Alexandrian context. Of course Aratus is mentioned as well, but even the papers on acrostics, as will become clear, are not flights of fancy.

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The editors have put the papers into five groups, beginning with “DISCOURSES OF PLAY”, under which fall three contributions. The simultaneous attention to book learning and performance is clear from the first sentence of the volume's first paper, “The Sympotic Tease” by Ewen Bowie, which is itself written in a teasing fashion: “My subject falls on the frontier between acrostichs and the like, whose nature is entirely to do with words, and indeed in most cases, inevitably, with written words, and the performance culture of the symposium, in which verbal entertainment and communication is only one part of a much wider range of performances and interactions – music, dancing, gift-giving, seducing”. Emphasizing the frequent possibility of translating παίζειν as “tease”, Bowie goes through a few erotic poems, mostly by Anacreon, in which not quite enough verbal information is given for the audience to solve their “riddles” easily, or to understand exactly what the relationship is between seduction in deed and seduction in word. Bowie's paper will be essential reading for all who wish

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mouths are opened (cf. esp. *ostia iamque domus patuere ingentia centum* [“and all at once the hundred vast mouths of the house gaped wide”; 6.81], part of the acrostic), it may be that Vergil is establishing a connection between the Sibyl/Apollo and Mars. But what the nature of this connection might be I do not know.

33 Cf. also 61 *oras* (“shores”; compare Oliensis 2004: 30)?

34 Gowers 2005.



to understand the Archaic and Classical precursors to Hellenistic verbal pyrotechnics as well as the relationship between riddles proper (γρίφοι and also αἰνίγματα; see Luz's paper) and "[t]he provision of incomplete and tantalising information[, which] seems to have been one of Anacreon's favoured techniques". Among the many points of interest is his analysis of fr. 359 *PMG* – Κλεοβούλου μὲν ἔγωγ' ἐρέω, | Κλεοβούλω δ' ἐπιμαίνομαι, | Κλεόβουλον δὲ δισκέω ("I love Cleoboulus, I'm mad about Cleoboulus, I *dioskeō* Cleoboulus") – and in particular his suggestion that Anacreon's final, accusative-governing verb, which baffled even ancient scholars (note Hesych. δ1926 Latte), is "perhaps ... not a rare word but a nonsense word, ... [something] to leave his audience guessing what the third limb of his polyptoton involves".<sup>35</sup>

Page and stage are both present as well in Pauline A. LeVen's "'You Make Less Sense than a (New) Dithyramb': Sociology of a Riddling Style", a masterly combination of lamp-lighted philology with the mosh pit of the New Music. Leading us through the variegated enigmatic diction of late fifth- and early fourth-century dithyrambs and nomes, as well as the use of such language in Middle Comedy, LeVen shows that the poetry of Timotheus and others offers up interpretive puzzles that work on multiple levels. In part, their "semantic exuberance" is the product of, and can be understood through, great learning, witness LeVen's own analysis of the Homeric resonance of the description in *Telestes* fr. 808.2 *PMG* of the *magadis*, a stringed instrument, as κερατόφωνο[ς] ("horn-voiced"). The adjective – a compound in a series of compounds – is a hapax that rests on the description of Odysseus' bow in Homer, *Odyssey* 21.404–409, where it is likened to another stringed instrument, the *phorminx*. And yet, as LeVen points out, "[t]he experience of the dithyramb's riddling diction", when "delivered to exciting music in large theaters ... with no opportunity for an audience to pause and think, is not the same kind of interpretive exercise as one would perform sitting in a library ... or hearing [such compounds] among a group of like-minded erudite deipnosophists, who all gather to display their skill and wisdom". It is to LeVen's credit that she not only rescues but, indeed, encourages us to laud the hermeneutics of the masses: "the social dynamics of the stage that dithyrambic diction establishes" are, she stresses, quite different from "the learned riddling diction of a Lycophron" (on which see Cusset and Kolde's paper). We ignore at our peril the fact that the elaborate texture of the New Music's poetry invites the audi-

35 See Watkins 2006: 517–518 (reprinted in Watkins 2010: 1051–1052) for a Jakobsonian analysis of the progression in this little "puzzle" from genitive to dative to accusative, with a comment on how δισκέω, if it means something like "gaze at" (as is generally said these days), thwarts our semantic expectations.

ence “to take part actively in the construction of meaning, ... mak[ing] for a communicative practice that is empowering ..., as it relies on anybody’s participation rather than exclusion on the basis of knowledge or class”.

Though superficially about very different sorts of texts – brief first-century AD Latin inscriptions of a largely non-poetic nature – Rebecca R. Benefiel’s “Magic Squares, Alphabet Jumbles, Riddles and More: The Culture of Word-Games among the Graffiti of Pompeii” stresses similarly that wordplay “did not take place only in elevated literary contexts, nor [was it] indulged in solely by the social elite”. After a discussion of the SATOR-ROTAS palindromic word square, the most famous and broadly attested instance of a verbal delight from the classical world,<sup>36</sup> and of AMOR-ROMA,<sup>37</sup> Benefiel moves on to alphabetic jumbles, which likewise “rely on a certain flexibility with language and a willingness to ignore strict linear progression in order to more fluidly read – or think – backwards and forwards”.<sup>38</sup> She then turns to epigraphic evidence of a more literary sort: a public *zetema* for others to solve or at least respond to (a contemporary audience will be reminded – also in the sexual content – of

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- 36 Examples are found across the Roman Empire, from Dura-Europos to Manchester. Benefiel speaks of the “immense” body of secondary literature on the meaning and larger cultural interpretation of the (“magic”?) square. *Quot homines tot sententiae*, but I would highlight Marcovich 1983 (revised in Marcovich 1988: 28–46), as well as Ernst 1991: 429–459 (from the perspective of pattern poetry) and Eco 2006 (a master semiotician at play).
- 37 Specifically the square ROMA-OLIM-MILO-AMOR. This is evidently connected to the widespread poetic play, best known from Propertius and Ovid, between *amor*/*Amor* and *Roma* (and *mora*), on which the best source remains Stanley 1963 (see also now Nelis 2006: 199–200 and various references in the footnotes in Cairns 2010: 245 and 263–265). Stephen M. Wheeler is preparing a book on the subject, tentatively titled *The Power of Rome’s Name: Myth and Meaning*.
- 38 The sequence AXBVCTDSERFQGPHOINKML (*CIL* 4.5472, 5499, and 9272; cf. also 6905 and 6907), in which the first letter is followed by the last, which in turn is followed by the second and then the penultimate, etc., shows how it might have been possible for the Romans to coin the Latin noun *elementum* “element; letter (of the alphabet)”, first attested c. 55 BC in Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* and Cicero’s *De oratore*, from the letters that open the second half of the alphabet: *LMN*. Though far from universally accepted (see, e.g., Liberman 2007), the abecedarian etymology (or secondary etymology: see Ivanov 1993) remains seductive, particularly in view of the use of *elementa* in Lucretius to describe the atoms of both word and world. The most interesting account is still Coogan 1974, which concentrates on Semitic but also cites the Pompeian evidence; see also Coogan 1990, with bibliography on the Cretan forms *poinikastas* “scribe” and *poinikazen* “to write” (literally “Phoenicianizer” and “to Phoenicianize”), whose resemblance to ...PHOINK... is just a coincidence (though in a collection on such things as acrostics, one must keep in mind Vladimir Nabokov’s wonderful phrase “the chance that mimics choice”, highlighted in a classical context by Clauss [1997]).

graffiti in bathroom stalls) and examples of interactive poetic production, as when one writer copies out a pair of amatory couplets from Ovid's *Amores* and Propertius, another one responds with a (minimally botched) couplet from the *Ars amatoria*, and then a third person comes along and composes yet another couplet, one that, as Benefiel puts it, "contribute[s] his thoughts on the tastiness of pork". (It might be added that an added pleasure of Benefiel's paper is the interactive scholarly production it has inspired: see Jerzy Danielewicz's attempt to understand *CIL* 4.1878.) Her study, which in the range of examples it considers makes the valuable point that the line between games and literature is not so clear, ends with the suggestion that the SVILIMEA (i.e., Aemilius – backwards) of *CIL* 4.659, and presumably other inscriptions as well, can likely be identified as the *scriptor* Aemilius Celer.

In the next (and longest) group of papers,<sup>39</sup> collectively titled "THE ANCIENT RIDDLE: THEORY AND PRACTICE", we move from things that resemble riddles (γρίφοισιν ὁμοῖα, as it were) to riddles themselves, beginning with "What Has It Got in Its Pockets? Or, What Makes a Riddle a Riddle?" by Christine Luz, the author of the 2010 book on Greek wordplay cited above. For most of her contribution, Luz goes through *griphoi* in Book 14 of the *Greek (Palatine) Anthology*, which in addition to oracles and arithmetical problems contains "by far the largest extant collection of ancient Greek riddles". Discussing the rhetoric of and solutions to a number of these riddles, whose most prominent features are metonymy/analogy, pun/double meaning, and paradox (often involving mythic characters), Luz suggests a commonsense way to distinguish between ordinary questions (e.g., "What makes a riddle a riddle?") and riddles, which "disguise[] and at the same time invite[] and challenge[] the reader to uncover the disguise". She notes that many *griphoi* "combine [these prominent features] into a multifaceted structure" and points out that while a good number of them are about mythic figures, "the solutions of these sometimes very complicated and seemingly insolvable descriptions are often next to banal ... [and] based on commonly-accessible knowledge".<sup>40</sup> If, then, there seems to be "a language of riddles", the question remains whether the ancient Greeks themselves conceived of the genre in the same or a similar way.<sup>41</sup> The answer, which occupies Luz at the end of her pa-

39 It would be even longer if it included a paper based on Marina F. A. Martelli's talk at the conference: "From the Oyster to Antinous: γρίφοι in the Papyri and Their Reception."

40 Compare LeVen on the rhetoric of the New Music, which is both *poikilos* and in a way surprisingly accessible.

41 See also Pütz 2007: 192–212.

per, is that such scholars as Aristotle and his pupil Clearchus of Soli, author of the fragmentarily preserved treatise *Περὶ γρίφων*, did indeed have “an awareness of the specific formal structure which riddles can have, and attempt[ed] to explain or rather classify them according to their formal appearance”, but they also made a distinction (though not wholly consistently) between γρίφοι and αἰνίγματα.<sup>42</sup> According to a scholion to Lucian’s *Vitarum auctio*, “in the *ainigma* one is aware of being ignorant whereas in the *griphos* one is ignorant but thinks one understands”. By this definition, the riddles in Book 14 of the *Greek Anthology* are *griphoi*; as for “What have I got in my pocket?”, which Bilbo Baggins asks the Gollum during their riddle contest in *The Hobbit*, this would be, in Greek terms, an *ainigma* – except, of course, that Bilbo said it to himself as an absentminded question and did not mean for it to be a riddle at all. As an Anglo-Saxonist, J. R. R. Tolkien was well aware of the Old English riddles, on which much has been and continues to be written. Luz’s paper, like the others in this group, is a contribution to the growing study of riddles from both a literary and a linguistic perspective, and we may hope that the present volume will spur others on to investigate the Roman material as carefully as the Greek, as well as to consider the Proto-Indo-European background of both and the properties of riddles cross-culturally.<sup>43</sup>

The features of riddling language are the subject of the next paper as well, Lisa Maurizio’s “*Technopaegnia* in Heraclitus and the Delphic Oracles: Shared Compositional Techniques”. Heraclitus’ sayings are famously enigmatic, and while not all are *griphoi* in the technical sense, quite a number of his aphorisms, as they are usually called, would not be out of place in Book 14 of the *Greek Anthology*: for example, the widely known riddle of the lice (B 56 Diels-Kranz), associated with the death of Homer (*Certamen* 18), which presents a paradox, and even the brief B 48, which plays on the double meaning of βίος (“life”) / βίός (“bow”). Maurizio pays close attention to the elements that add up to create Heraclitus’ gnomic style, a style that has been called “orational” on account of its reliance – in no small part, presumably, for mnemonic purposes – on such morpho-

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42 Compare Luz 2010: 144–145, part of her “Exkurs zum γρίφος” (139–146). (Note also παύνια; see Kwapisz’s paper.) Unfortunately, a paper by Aurélien Berra based on his excellent talk “The Horizon of Ancient Greek Riddling: Clearchus and the Problem of Genre” does not appear in this volume. Berra is preparing for publication his 2008 doctoral thesis, *Théorie et pratique de l’énigme en Grèce ancienne* (École des hautes études en sciences sociales).

43 See above all Cook 2006 and the papers in Hasan-Rokem and Shulman 1996; see also Pepicello and Green 1984. For an overview of Indo-European riddling, see West 2007: 363–372; Katz (2006) discusses the Riddle of the Sphinx from an Indo-European perspective.

phonological features as alliteration and consonance, on syntactic parallelism, and on more nebulous semantic properties that are characteristic of riddles and puns, including metaphor and others figures of speech discussed by Luz. Heraclitus' wise jingles are obviously philosophically significant; in addition, Maurizio suggests, they have importance for our understanding of the history and wider cultural relevance of Greek religious practice, being connected to the words of the Pythia in form and also content. Concentrating on the oracles attributed to Delphi by Herodotus, she concludes that "metaphors and acoustic devices occur with considerable frequency" and that "Heraclitus' ambiguity might rightfully be called 'Delphic elements'"; moreover, she calls Heraclitus "rather a Pythia manqué" and ends the paper with the intriguing idea that despite their "admittedly great differences" in intellectual style, "there are more similarities than have thus far been recognized" between Heraclitus and the Delphic oracles.

The contrast in approach and conclusions between Maurizio's paper and the one that immediately follows, "'Gods Cannot Tell Lies': Riddling and Ancient Greek Divination" by Frederick G. Naerebout and Kim Beerden, is probably the starkest in the collection. Their methodologically impressive, learned, and big-picture essay argues that researchers who examine riddles and oracles together, whatever conclusions they may come to about the relationship between the two, have not begun with the right question. In their opinion, it is not a matter of whether or not divinatory riddles, as in Herodotus, reflect actual oracular practice. Rather, positing an "admittedly old-fashioned difference between *Dichtung und Wahrheit*", they claim that "whether any individual oracular pronouncement is authentic or not does not matter". Actual oracles, Naerebout and Beerden strongly urge us to understand, were necessarily clear and unambiguous; the same, obviously, cannot be said about riddles. (They note that most Greek riddles "do not belong in the realm of religion and myth", though it is these that command particular scholarly attention.) As for how, then, we are to understand the existence of riddling oracles, the authors make the novel claim that these are, or at least started out as, a literary device aimed at an audience that enjoyed verbal contests: "[T]he riddle makes for a good story", adding drama, and "the image of a riddling oracle was quite appealing to [the Greeks] – even if they themselves would find this unacceptable in real life". Indeed, it became so appealing that "oracles came to be seen in a riddling light, even though in real life they were meant to give certainty and reassurance".

Another elegantly argued paper comes from the pen of Jan Kwapisz, the force behind ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ and one of the editors of the present volume: "Were There Hellenistic Riddle Books?" Yes, there were: evi-

dence is scanty, but “if we look ... carefully enough it will be sufficient to allow us to reach the conclusion that during an age in which book culture was beginning to flourish, riddles not only entered the domain of the book, but also became more important constituents of it than we might have supposed”. Kwapisz is careful not to overstate his conclusions, going step-by-step through the reasons, if any, to believe that there existed collections of Simonidean riddles (little to none) and riddles attributed to Cleoboulina (possible) prior to Clearchus’ Περὶ γρίφων (a “cabinet of curiosities” rather than a riddle book per se) and, especially, the Παίγνια of Philitas of Cos and the collection of polymetric pattern poems by Simias of Rhodes (of unknown title but perhaps also called Παίγνια). Kwapisz makes a number of specific philological observations in the course of providing an important chapter in the generic history of wordplay, ending with a brief account of some later works, including Lycophron’s *Alexandra*, in which the “more or less direct inspiration” of Philitas and Simias may be detected.<sup>44</sup> We eagerly anticipate this scholar’s forthcoming edition of the Greek pattern poems, on which see the papers by Pappas and Milewska-Ważbińska.

Lycophron is the subject of the next paper, by Christophe Cusset and Antje Kolde, two scholars who have worked extensively on the *Alexandra*, both together and separately. The latest in a series of studies by Cusset on wordplay in Hellenistic poetry, “The Rhetoric of the Riddle in the *Alexandra* of Lycophron” considers not riddles *sensu stricto* but the enigmatic replacement of proper names, which the poet tends to avoid, by “onomastic *détournements*”, in particular those that involve dogs, divinities, and their combination. According to the authors, these encrypted expressions take a number of forms, from Saussurean cryptograms (Σ-KY(να)-K-Y-Λ-Λ-A [i.e., Σκύλλα] may be “under the words” in verses 45–47; compare n. 5 above) to more straightforward pseudonymic metaphors (e.g., speaking of Helen as a “bitch”) with both intra- and intertextual references. The result is a densely allusive poem “whose language is so obscure that [its readers] find themselves caught as if in a net: the strategy consists in creating another γρίφος, that is to say, in constructing a network or net [NB: the first meaning of γρίφος is “creel”; see Lowe’s paper] that brings together all the pieces of information disseminated by Lycophron, sometimes in several passages, and that allows us, by correlating them, to find the solution to the riddle”.

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44 They were an inspiration also to the late first-century AD Roman poet Laevius, whose fragments were the subject of the talk at the conference by Dimitrios Mantzilas: “Intertextuality, Language Experimentation and *ludus* in Laevius’ *Erotopaegnia*”.

The final paper in the group on the ancient riddle is Erin Sebo's "*In scirpo nodum: Symphosius' Reworking of the Riddle Form*". Probably composed around AD 400, the century of Latin riddles collected as the *Aenigmata* of the pseudonymous "Symphosius" is a true riddle book (see Kwapisz's paper on the concept) – and a book that was, at its time, "unusual, even unique" in being, in Sebo's persuasive analysis, not just intricate but artfully arranged. Each of Symphosius' verbal puzzles is headed by a title that gives the answer, which leads naturally enough to Sebo's query, "When we are presented with a riddle collection which gives us answers before questions, as it were, what else should we do?" Sebo's answer is that "Symphosius forces us to go looking in *scirpo nodum*, 'for a knot in a bullrush', to go looking for trouble", in particular to think actively about how riddles work and arrive at alternative solutions.<sup>45</sup> Symphosius' *Aenigmata* is an encyclopedia of sorts<sup>46</sup> – the author "composes one riddle per subject and orders them so that they trace a trajectory through the totality of the physical world" – and among Sebo's many interesting suggestions is that the riddles are organized in three main ways: according to subject (e.g., animals), according to motif or theme (e.g., animals of "mixed species parentage"), and – most strikingly – according to phonetic similarity (e.g., *Grus* "crane" immediately follows *Mus* "mouse", while *Malum* "apple" and *Malleus* "hammer" are separated by a single riddle). The result is a work that "explores and enacts plurality in as many ways as possible", both in its composition and in the responses it is designed to elicit from its audience, for "rather than displacing one answer with another, Symphosius' text encourages us to see that the entitled solution is one among many possible answers".

The third group of papers, "VISUAL POETRY IN THE TEXT AND ON THE STONE", opens with "The Treachery of Verbal Images: Viewing the Greek *technopaegnia*" by Alexandra Pappas. By *technopaegnia* (literally "skillful playthings"), a word coined by Ausonius in the fourth century AD and sometimes today used to refer to verbal games of all sorts,<sup>47</sup> Pappas means what in Latin are called *carmina figurata*, that is to say, calligrams or pattern poetry – the most common specific use of the term these days and one that may have originated in Poland in the late sixteenth century (see

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45 Compare the paper by Naerebout and Beerden, as well as Katz 2006: 180–185, with the literature cited therein.

46 "Encyclopedism" has been a hot topic in classics for many years, though usually in connection with a rather different author, Pliny the Elder. It would be nice to see more work that brings literature that is not traditionally considered encyclopedic into our understanding of how knowledge is ordered in the Roman Empire (on which see the papers in König and Whitmarsh 2007).

47 See, e.g., Luz 2010, as well as the title of Maurizio's paper.

Milewska-Ważbińska's paper). Not an edition or line-by-line commentary on the poems, Pappas' essay instead contextualizes them, explaining how Greek literary and material aesthetics intersect and why it is a mistake to consider such works as Simias' *Axe*, *Wings*, and *Egg* (see Kwapisz's paper) only as products of the Hellenistic age rather than "situat[ing them] within a larger Greek continuum – as a specific, but not isolated, moment within the ever-evolving relationship between the Greek literary and visual arts". Besides providing attractive English translations, Pappas nicely brings out the relationship, both in theoretical terms and with specific reference to the six poems under discussion, between production and viewing in works of art whose craftsmanship is so overtly a part of their appeal. Her (and Milewska-Ważbińska's) attention to the visual is a welcome change from the usual philological preoccupations of scholars interested in *technopaegnia* and makes a fine contribution to "the history of art history".<sup>48</sup>

If you are a fan of acrostics, then the simple existence of N-I-K-A-N-Δ-P-O-Σ in Nicander, *Theriaca* 345–353 and (presumably, once lightly emended) *Alexipharmaca* 266–274 will be well known to you. What Michael B. Sullivan does in his punny paper "Nicander's Aesopic Acrostic and Its Antidote", however, is show that Nicander's two signatures deserve more than an unreflective acknowledgment in a catalogue of Hellenistic oddities. Though he does not go so far as to call Nicander a great poet, Sullivan demonstrates that his acrostics are not bagatelles but fit in a number of hitherto underappreciated ways into Greek literary history. At a relatively low but actually quite important level, he explains in detail how the appearance of N-I-K-A-N-Δ-P-O-Σ in the *Alexipharmaca*, a work on poisons and their antidotes that he suggests is to be dated after the *Theriaca* (which is about venomous animals and the wounds they inflict), ties in with and is itself, so to speak, a poetic antidote to the same acrostic in the earlier work, which the *Alexipharmaca* in a number of ways inverts. More broadly, he refuses to look at Nicander only from the Hellenistic point of view (compare Pappas's approach to *technopaegnia*) and argues, with reference to animal *ainoi* in Hesiod and Callimachus, that "the poet displays remarkable wit and innovation in his adaptation of at least one

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48 Similar concerns occupied one of the editors of this volume, David Petrain, in his talk at the conference: "Text as Figure on the *Tabulae Iliacae*", whose subject was a cross of sorts between those of Benefiel and Pappas. The *Tabulae Iliacae*, on which see now also Squire 2011, are the subject of Petrain's book *Homer in Stone: The Tabulae Iliacae in Their Roman Context*, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.



poetic tradition – the Aesopic fable”.<sup>49</sup> The result, Sullivan proposes, is a true multifaceted “victory of man” (cf. Nicander’s name, whose elements are reversed in Ἀνδρόνικος, the name of Callimachus’ addressee in *Ia.* 2, fr. 192 Pfeiffer).

The final two papers of the group make a wonderful pair: Valentina Garulli’s “Greek Acrostic Verse Inscriptions” and Rachel Mairs’s “*Sopha grammata*: Acrostichs in Greek and Latin Inscriptions from Arachosia, Nubia and Libya”. Both make the point that inscribed acrostics, all of which highlight a personal name (cf. N-I-K-A-N-Δ-P-O-Σ and many other literary parallels), are generally from the periphery of the Greco-Roman world, from Kandahar (in present-day Afghanistan) to Kalabsha (Nubia). Garulli presents us with a meticulously documented edition of fourteen Greek acrostics that meet three criteria: “they are preserved as inscriptions”; “they contain no reference ... to Christianity”; and “they show such a unique and consistent relationship between the acrostic and the poem as to imply a well-defined project and lay to rest any suspicion that the acrostic might be fortuitous”. Her commentary following the edition is impressive as well, explaining in detail such stylistic matters as how an acrostic can affect the length and diction of the poem as a whole and what it adds to the poem’s message aside from mere play. In the end, she highlights a possible service an inscribed acrostic *qua* “summary banner” could have provided to readers: “[T]he provenance of the acrostic poems examined from areas where Greek was not the only (or first) language might also suggest that the acrostics could have functioned as a socially-oriented abstract of the whole inscribed text, especially for readers who were not native or good speakers of the Greek language”.

In her likewise learned and exceptionally sympathetic paper, Mairs concentrates less on the perceptions of readers and more on what the authors (or claimed authors) themselves were trying to convey with the seven inscriptions that she presents from “the furthest limits of the Roman Empire and Hellenistic states”: four in Greek (all in Garulli’s corpus) and three in Latin. It is usual enough to laugh at the linguistic “incompetence” of peripherally located non-native speakers of the classical tongues. However, noting the many literary devices and modes of self-presentation that acrostic inscriptions have in common, many of them undeniably sophisticated, Mairs comes out swinging: “I would like to shift the emphasis towards regarding a few of these inscriptions ... as *successful* exercises in demonstrating their authors’ literary accomplishments and ability to oper-

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49 Castelletti (2012a) now suggests an elaborate connection among the verse-initial word ἰδυσοσύνη (“with wisdom”, part of the acrostic) at *Ther.* 346, ἰδυσοσύνησιν at Hes. *Theog.* 377, and a would-be bit of play on the same word in Aratus.

ate at a high level in a Greek cultural sphere” (compare Benefiel’s paper about Pompeii). In the inscription of Sophytos, for example, apparently from turn-of-the-millennium Kandahar and first published under a decade ago, the author is “extremely well-educated, and not just ‘well-educated for an Arachosian’”. Although Arachosia is geographically distant from and unconnected sociopolitically to Nubia and Libya, it is “not”, Mairs argues, “a coincidence that we find similar forms of cultural expression and levels of ethnic ambiguity in such interaction-zones at the edges of the Hellenistic or Roman Empires”. Taken together with Garulli’s contribution, we have here a careful account of what the cultural expression of elaborate epigraphic wordplay consists in – and what it can achieve.

The next group of papers, “CASE STUDIES”, contains contributions by three scholars, two distinguished Poles and a young Englishman. Krystyna Bartol’s “*Versus anacyclici*: The Case of *P. Sorb. 72*” (= adesp. com. fr. 52 *PCG*)” gives an overview of what we know about classical anacyclic verses – in which “the words of the first line are repeated in a companion line in a different order, but in the same metre” – before turning to the analysis of a specific example, a fourteen-verse speech of Eros known from a late-third-century BC papyrus that begins, Ἔρως Ἀφροδίτης υἱὸς ἐπιεικὴς [ν]έος, | νέος ἐπιεικὴς υἱὸς Ἀφροδίτης Ἔρως, ... (“Love, Aphrodite’s son, gentle youth, | youth gentle, son of Aphrodite, Love, ...”). A “kind of *griphos*”, in Bartol’s opinion, the work has as its “most striking characteristic ... the coexistence of two mimetic approaches towards two differently functioning models of producing a text”. Specifically, “it resembles a *hypothesis* to a comedy and at the same time is intended to form the prologue to a comedy. Thus, it recalls directly two alternative kinds of text – a subliterate text and an artistic composition”. Bartol considers the formal structure and possible context of the “fake prologue”, which may have borne as its title the solution to the riddle, Τροιζηνία (“The Girl from Troizen”; the word appears in the accusative in verses 7 and 8), and supposes that it may have been meant for use in a school (*ludus in ludo*): “[T]he author of this enigma seems to have intended to provide his audience with something easy and plain with respect to the content, but extraordinary and attractive with respect to the words’ arrangement”. This and the papers that follow demonstrate how an old poem can still reveal new tricks.<sup>50</sup>

50 Bartol notes that on the same side of the papyrus are the “fragmentary remnants of the summary of a play’s plot arranged in the form of an *abecedarius*, verses κατ’ ἀλφάβητον” (adesp. com. fr. 53 *PCG*). In this connection, it may be worth pointing out that the opening sequence of Eros’ speech (Ἔρως, Ἀφροδίτης υἱὸς) has one instance apiece of all seven Greek vowels. If this were Latin, I would be more inclined to view the fact as significant – see Katz 2009: 79–84, esp. 81–82, for a very

Next comes a three-part paper by Jerzy Danielewicz: “A Palindrome, an Acrostich and a Riddle: Three Solutions”. At the conference, Danielewicz, author (among much else) of one of the best recent papers on acrostics,<sup>51</sup> delivered a talk that forms the basis of the first part of his published contribution, “‘Omnino non intellegitur’? An Attempt at Deciphering a Mysterious Palindrome (*SH* 996.13)”; the other two brief studies were inspired by the presentations of Garulli and Mairs (acrostic) and Benefiel (riddle). All three read like good-natured detective stories, especially the first, in which Danielewicz proposes that the sequence {ν}ορτεπισυννακαπρον[α]νορπακανινυσιτετρον (“omnino non intellegitur”, according to the formidable pair of Hugh Lloyd-Jones and Peter Parsons) is a palindrome that might once have been written in a circle on a stone and that it might be translated as, “From the place where (this stone once) attacked a (wild) swine I carried it off to be a landmark for swine”. He concludes, “If the inscription refers to a situation connected with the stone on which it was originally inscribed, it tells us about a man who saw a stone falling on or rolling down a slope upon a swine and decided to utilise it, accordingly, as a landmark indicating the part of the *oikos* or other place in which swine were kept, bred, pastured, etc. The function of that stone may have been, for example, apotropaic”. Danielewicz’s second study notes that the inscription from Kalabsha (*IMEG* 168) that contains the acrostic M-A-Ξ-I-M-O-Σ Δ-E-K-O-Y-P-I-Ω-N E-Γ-P-A-Ψ-A (“I, the Decurion Maximus, wrote [this]”) in verses 1–22 continues on to verse 36 (where the reader is given a massive hint: “trusting in the first twenty-two [or: twenty-two first] letters”). He proposes that verses 23–34 contain an unnoticed second acrostic – indeed, a Greco-Roman acrostic-*cum*-telestich. Finally, Danielewicz reconsiders from many angles *CIL* 4.1878, a Pompeian *zetema* of likely obscene sense for which he ventures two possible translations.

The last paper in the penultimate section is Dunstan Lowe’s “Triple Tipple: Ausonius’ *Griphus ternarii numeri*”, which gives a tour-de-force

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quick overview of the not inconsiderable evidence that Latin poets actively tried to make use of the vocalic gamut in their incipits, as in *A Ioue* (“from Jove”) at the start of Cicero’s *Aratea* (I will discuss the matter properly on another occasion; see now Volk 2012: 231–232) – but there may also be evidence for such play in Greek (despite its absence from Luz 2010). The matter is complicated (among other things by the question of whether one can ignore the phonetic and/or graphic differences between epsilon and eta and between omicron and omega), but the prime example is Pindar’s Ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ (“Water is best”; *Ol.* 1.1), on which see Thummer 1968: 138–139 and Slater 1986: 146 (references I owe to Hayden Pelliccia).

51 Danielewicz 2005.

explanation of the complex “wickerwork” of Ausonius’ numerological *Riddle of the Number Three*, a (possibly self-stylized) *griphus* that is not actually a *griphus* since the solution is in one sense evident: it’s all about three (and multiples thereof). “[I]ntricately crafted from strands of learning across the spectrum of classical learning”, this ninety-line poem, together with its important prose preface (“the only extant Latin discussion of riddle-writing in antiquity besides the much briefer comment at Gellius 12.6”), is “an encoding of Roman culture into a specimen of formalist perfection, rather than a ‘riddle’ in the strict sense”. Even so, it bears an interesting resemblance to Symphosius’ *Aenigmata*, a true and roughly contemporary collection of *scirpi* (see Sebo’s paper), and Lowe suggests that “the fact that both Symphosius and Ausonius favour the number three in what both authors claim to be riddles composed at drinking-parties may point to a lost mutual source, perhaps in Greek, with a triple theme”. Both Ausonius and Lowe tell us more (?) than we ever wanted to know about trios and triplets, but whether or not Lowe is right to follow Jesús Hernández Lobato in seeing the poem as a whole as “a riddling reference to the significantly absent triad of the imperial family, the *tres Augusti* (Valentinian, Valens and Gratian)” (rather than to, say, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity), I say, Hip hip hooray.

The volume closes with two delightful papers in the fifth and final group: “PLAYFUL RECEPTIONS”. The first, which has something to say about the Trinity as well (see below), is “The *Aulularia inversa* of Joannes Burmeister” by Michael Fontaine, whose recent book on Plautus is the most original sustained piece of scholarship on classical wordplay to appear in decades.<sup>52</sup> Here Fontaine trades in the *Aulularia* for “a bizarre adaptation” of the play by the Lutheran priest and Neo-Latin poet Joannes Burmeister of Lüneburg (1576–1638): Plautus meets the Book of Joshua in a cross of “Neo-Latin school drama with Protestant *parodia sacra*”. Published in Hamburg in 1629, Burmeister’s *Aulularia* is a remarkable document – and entirely unknown until Fontaine located a copy, the only one known to survive, in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. In this paper, “a companion piece” to other forthcoming work on Burmeister, including an edition of his *Aulularia*, Fontaine tantalizes the reader with a brief account of what he has been able to piece together of Burmeister’s history and methods; naturally enough, though, he concentrates on wordplay, demonstrating that this writer knew his Roman source so well that he was able to “augment[] his play with some puns that seem quintessentially Plautine, but that cannot actually be found anywhere in Plautus”. A high point is

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52 Fontaine 2010. Fontaine is also the author of many learned and entertaining articles about wordplay in early Roman comedy and elsewhere.

Fontaine's proposal that the use of the vocative *trinune* ("three-in-one, triune") in verse 945 "unite[s] (1) a characteristically *Plautine* prefix with (2) a *Christian* Neo-Latin word of recent coinage and (3) a *Hebrew* context to produce a word simultaneously interpretable as either (a) a prophetic anticipation of the Christian Messiah in his eternal glory by his ancestor, or (b) a devout conversion and welcoming into the Jewish faith of a Canaanite woman". "This", he says, "may be the most perfect Latin wordplay of all time". An exaggeration? Fontaine ends by inviting colleagues to join him in learning about and evaluating the achievements of this largely forgotten Imperial Poet Laureate of the Holy Roman Empire.

Finally, Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska in her "Waste of Time or Artistic Expression? Notes on *poesis artificiosa* of the Modern Era" introduces those of us who have not (yet) polished our Polish to the substantial interest in Poland, especially during the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in the production of Neo-Latin poetry that combines elaborate verbal and visual effects. While Burmeister in Lower Saxony was playing with the letters in his name, Marcin Wadowski was doing the same thing in a work published in Cracow in 1617 – and among his precedents were an onomastic acrostic by the great archbishop and poet Andrzej Krzycki (1482–1537), various acrostics, palindromes, and riddles in the works of the leading poet of the Polish Renaissance, Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584), and the books of Mikołaj Lubomirski, one of them a volume of pattern poems titled, significantly, *Technopaegnion sacropoeticum* (1598). Milewska-Ważbińska explains that although many figures of the Italian Renaissance considered pattern poetry to be a trifle, in Poland there was a "relationship between the proliferation of *poesis artificiosa* and an upbringing in the spirit of the Christian religion. Analyzing and interpreting *poesis artificiosa* was often supposed to teach students to commune with God". Among other things, she suggests that Renaissance and Baroque pattern poetry, whose floruit came at the end of the seventeenth century, is "a conscious reference" to much older material in Greek, and she joins Pappas in stressing the connection, for both composer and reader, between writing and visual art. By bringing to a wider audience the Polish material – including secondary literature from recent decades, above all Piotr Rypson's 2002 book *Piramidy, słońca, labirynty: Poezja wizualna w Polsce od XVI do XVIII wieku* – Milewska-Ważbińska has done a great service to everyone interested in the classical tradition.

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The best-known example of an inner-Latin etymology *e contrario* ("from the opposite") is *lucus a non lucendo*: "It's called a grove from not being

light”, or “*Grove*, from *not grave*”. First found in this form in Servius’ commentary on Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.22, it is today a catch phrase for an absurd explanation. At some point, the existence of *lucus a non lucendo* gave rise, in an abecedarian (or at least “cedarian”) playful move, to another ludic etymology, *ludus a non ludendo*: “It’s called school from not playing”, or “*School*, from *not cool*”. This phrase – not found in exactly this form until modern times, but there is plenty of evidence for the ancient idea – is possible thanks to the two basic meanings of the noun *ludus* in Latin: “game, sport, play” and “place of instruction or training, school”.<sup>53</sup> The connection between them is not immediately obvious, though the latter is often thought to be a calque on Greek σχολή, whose primary sense, “leisure, rest, ease”, was eclipsed early on by its familiar secondary meaning, “school”: “that in which leisure is employed, ... esp. learned discussion, disputation, lecture” and, then, “a group to whom lectures were given, school” (LSJ s.v. σχολή II). The two kinds of school to which the Romans most often applied their word were the gladiatorial and the LMNtary (literally “αβic”), that is, *ludus gladiatorius* and *ludus litterarius*.<sup>54</sup>

Most scholars today believe that gladiatorial *ludus* preceded the scholastic kind and that the first Roman “play school”<sup>55</sup> was for young recruits to engage in mock war games in advance of what historian of Roman education Stanley F. Bonner calls “the stern reality of battle”.<sup>56</sup> From this it

53 Habinek (2005: 110–157, with notes on 278–283) has controversial things to say about the relationship in Rome between song/poetry and play, a concept that “does not exist except in dynamic interrelationship with reality” (111). Indeed, Habinek continues, “[i]n the Latin language, there is no essential meaning to the word *ludus*”.

54 Some further details on *luc/dus* are to be found in Katz 2010a: 343. I argue in Katz 2010a and 2010b that etymology and wordplay make a natural intellectual as well as historical pair.

55 According to google, “play school” and “playschool” are less common than “Playskool”, a division of the toy company Hasbro, whose motto, “More than Play”, can hardly fail to suggest as its counterpart “Less than Skool”.

56 Bonner 1977: 56–57, with notes on 342 (quotation at 57); see also Index s.v. “*ludus*: ... play on word” (398). Bonner’s ludic conclusions were largely anticipated by Yon (1940), who emphatically denies that there is a semantic connection between the Latin word and σχολή and makes an interesting case that the primary meaning of *ludus* was something more technical (and aerobic) than simply “jeu”; see also now Corbeill 2001: 277–278 (a reference I owe to Bob Kaster). Unfortunately, there are no clear cognates of *ludus* outside Latin, so the word’s Proto-Indo-European background, if any, is unknown; as for what happens after Latin, Huizinga (1949: 36) writes that “[i]t is remarkable that *ludus*, as the general term for play, has not only not passed into the Romance languages but has left hardly any traces there, so far as I can see. In all of them – and this necessarily means at a quite early period – *ludus* has been supplanted by a derivative of *jocus*, which ex-

was a small semantic jump to mental rather than physical maneuvers, and around 230 BC the first private elementary school in Rome opened for business, the brainchild of an ex-slave, one Spurius Carvilius Ruga. According to Plutarch's *Roman Questions* (14 = *Mor.* 267b–c and 59 = *Mor.* 278e) and other sources, the man whose freedman he was, the twice-consul Spurius Carvilius Maximus Ruga, was the first Roman to divorce his wife. This factoid is probably spurious, and so most likely is Plutarch's claim (*Quaest. Rom.* 54 = *Mor.* 277d) that it was this first schoolmaster (*ludi magister*, or “teacher of the *ludus*”) who invented the letter G, no doubt by adding a stroke to the already existing C, which in early Latin inscriptions is indeed employed to represent both the voiceless sound [k] and its voiced counterpart, [g].<sup>57</sup>

As it happens, etymologists today understand that *lucus* (“grove”) and *lucendo* (a participial form of *lucere* [“shine”]) share a root, Proto-Indo-European *\*leuk-* “become light” (as also, e.g., in Latin *lux* [“light”]), and are thus related after all. In fact, as already some ancients knew who did not miss the “clearing” (the original meaning of *lucus*) for the trees, *lucus a lucendo*: “It’s called a clearing from being clear”. The papers that follow are a shining example of how Spurius Carvilius Ruga’s descendants, teaching and conducting research in an environment indebted to classical σχολαί and *ludi*, amuse themselves by combining work and play. Clearly, *ludus a ludendo*.

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tended its specific sense of joking and jesting to ‘play’ in general”. To this observation, however, it needs to be added that Latin *iocus* (whence Italian *gioco*, French *jeu*, etc.) comes from a Proto-Indo-European root that means simply “speak” (*\*iek-*), witness Umbrian IUKA, IUKU “(cultic?) words” (see Schirmer 1998: 157–168, esp. 165–168) and Welsh *iaith* “language”. Consequently, in pre- or very early Latin, words really were play.

57 See now Weiss 2009: 27–28, esp. n. 20.

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## I. Discourses of Play



# The Sympotic Tease

Ewen Bowie

## 1. Introduction

My subject falls on the frontier between acrostichs and the like, whose nature is entirely to do with words, and indeed in most cases, inevitably, with written words, and the performance culture of the symposium, in which verbal entertainment and communication<sup>1</sup> is only one part of a much wider range of performances and interactions – music, dancing, gift-giving, seducing. Much of that wider range falls into what is referred to in Greek as *παίζειν*, which has emboldened me to look for my subject in this quarter. What I discuss here also falls within the activities that in English are called “teasing”, and for which again the Greek term *παίζειν* can sometimes be used. That is not to say that the range of meaning of *παίζειν* is co-extensive with that of the English word “tease”, and I am very conscious that my presumptions and interpretations are in danger of being language-specific, because different forms of activity that in English are all referred to by the verb or noun “tease” are distinguished in some languages.

One sense of “tease” that I am not going to pursue is that applied to situations where false information is given with the intention that in due course it will be revealed to be false, and in the expectation that this sequence of misleading information, followed by revelation of the truth, will cause amusement rather than (or perhaps as well as) damage or distress. Thus if in a talk to a conference I announced that I was going to ignore the guidelines that the organisers had asked speakers to observe and that I was going to speak uninterrupted for three hours, there would initially be much pain and consternation in the audience. If after a few seconds I said “No, don’t worry. I was only teasing”, distress would give way to relief and pleasure. Ἀλλὰ θαρρεῖτε, τοῦτο γὰρ μόνον παίζων εἶπον, would be one way of saying this in Greek, and certainly it would be an example of one

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1 See Bowie 1993.

sort of *παίζειν*. I have little doubt that such misleading utterances could have been heard in early and classical Greek symposia. But such utterances' negative truth-value only becomes apparent when the speaker reveals his or her exploitation of the regular expectation in communication situations that statements will be true and not false. When dealing with the all too scant remains of sympotic song – melic and elegiac – or sympotic spoken poetry – iambic – we, two and half millennia later, are never, I think, in a position to establish for certain that a statement is false and not to be taken at face value.

The sort of teasing utterance that I am indeed to examine is related to the case I have just considered, but is less extreme. It is the sort of utterance whereby the speaker indicates that he or she *might* do or say something, or *might have* done or said something, that would please the person or persons listening, but these listeners are unsure whether to interpret the statement as truthful. One assumption in these situations is that the audience would be pleased to have the information or observe the action that *might* follow. If an academic friend in another University tells me that he or she knows who has been appointed to a coveted post in our field, but suggests that this is confidential information that should not be passed on, that friend is “teasing” because it is clear that I would be very keen to know what had happened. An analogy from the non-verbal world of entertainment is the “strip-tease” where at early stages in the performance the viewers are “teased” because they are not sure if they are going to be allowed see what the performer's actions give *some* indication that they might expect in due course to see. But the “tease” only works if the viewers want to see. If we are at an Oscar party in Beverly Hills and the performer is a young and beautiful actress most men in the room probably would encourage her to perform a strip-tease. If we were at a party in Sardinia and the prime minister of Italy began to perform a strip-tease the effect would very probably be different. In the case of an appointment to a post in a University I would not be “teased” in the least if I had no interest at all in the candidates for the post.

Such “teasing” clearly happened at symposia. The non-verbal kind is exemplified, perhaps, by the erotic ballet at the end of Xenophon's *Symposium*,<sup>2</sup> where the “tease” results from the viewers' uncertainty about how far the two young performers are going to go in their miming of the love-making of Dionysus and Ariadne, and perhaps about whether the couple is doing nothing more than miming.

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2 Xen. *Symp.* 9.





worship, as of course gods can do. Anacreon, for all his white hair, would have liked to συμπαίξειν with the girl, but she παίζει him, briefly seeming to offer what she does not then give. And so too does the singer Anacreon παίζει with his sympotic audience.

I now move to cases where the teasing is entirely confined within the words of the singer's performance, and I shall begin once more with an example from Anacreon:

ὄναξ, ᾧ δαμάλης Ἔρωσ  
καὶ Νύμφαι κυναὼπίδες  
πορφυρῇ τ' Ἀφροδίτῃ  
συμπαίζουσιν, ἐπιστρέφει  
δ' ὑψηλὰς ὀρέων κορυφάς· 5  
γουνουδαί σε, σὺ δ' εὐμενῆς  
ἔλθ' ἡμῖν, κεχαρισμένης  
δ' εὐχολῆς ἐπακούειν·  
Κλεοβούλῳ δ' ἀγαθὸς γένεο  
σύμβουλος, τὸν ἐμὸν δ' ἔρω- 10  
τ', ᾧ Δεόνυσσε, δέχεσθαι.

(Anacreon fr. 357 *PMG*)

It is no accident that the divinities addressed and described in the first three lines are said in the fourth line to *συμπαίζειν*: the divine play on the remote mountain heights mirrors the human play in the symposium which constitutes the song's performance context; and, as I shall argue, *συμπαίζειν* sets the tone for the degree of puzzlement with which the audience must receive the song. The fact that we have to guess just what sort of play they are engaged in complements and reinforces the uncertainty concerning the identity of the addressee. Ὀναξ can be used to address any male divinity. This god's playing with the Nymphs indeed points to Dionysus: but it is only when we move from a mythological reading, imagining a scene like many on painted pottery of the later sixth century where Dionysus and Nymphs are represented sporting, usually with Satyrs, to a metaphorical reading, where Dionysus stands for wine, the Nymphs for water and Aphrodite and Eros for love-making – it is only then that we can decide that the Ὀναξ must almost certainly address Dionysus. Given that our singer is Anacreon, however, a teaser and a trickster, it is only in the closural vocative in line 11 ὦ Δεόνυσε that an audience acquires full certainty that the song has been a hymn or prayer to Dionysus.

But what is the prayer? Dionysus is asked to come predisposed to respond to what Anacreon wants – εὐμενής – so that when he hears Anacreon's εὐχολή it will give him pleasure – κεχαρισμένης. What, then, is this εὐχολή? Is it simply a prayer that Cleobulus will see sense and accede to Anacreon's request for sexual favours? Why should that constitute something that Dionysus will perceive as giving him pleasure, κεχαρισμένης?

The text I have printed is that of MS Parisinus 2958 (Arnim's B) of Dio of Prusa, to whose quotation in *Oration* 2.62 we owe this poem, and as I shall shortly argue, that text should be accepted. But many scholars since Kan in *Mnemosyne* 1881 emend to γ':<sup>7</sup>

Κλεοβούλω δ' ἀγαθὸς γένηο  
σύμβουλος, τὸν ἐμὸν γ' ἔρω-  
τ', ὦ Δεόνυσε, δέχεσθαι.

With γ' (a) Anacreon's request is that Dionysus give Cleobulus the advice Anacreon would like him to give and (b) that advice is to accept Anacreon's propositioning. There is little in this for Dionysus – perhaps pleasure in the contribution wine has made to Cleobulus's decision to succumb – and it has the consequence that two nicely parallel infinitives (ἐπακούειν, δέχεσθαι) perform quite different syntactical functions.

These infinitives' functions remain parallel if we retain δ', but we are left with the problem of interpreting τὸν ἐμὸν ἔρωτα δέχεσθαι. Dionysus is asked "to accept my *eros*". That this is how the poem should be understood seems clear if we look at parallels in dedicatory epigrams of the period. A god is asked to receive an offering, and by the *do ut des* principle is asked to give a favour in return. The principle and some of the vocabulary is exemplified in a dedication from the Athenian acropolis of the period 450–425 BC, which I have recently discussed briefly in Bowie 2010a: 354:

πότνι', ἀπαρχὴν τένδε Μένανδρο[ς ~ ~ ~ ~] |  
εὐχολὲν τελέσας σοὶ χάριν ἀντ[ιδιδὸς] |  
Αἰγίλιεὺς ἠυῖος Δεμετρίῳ ἡδ[~ ~ ~ ~] |  
σδιζε, Διὸς θύγατερ, τὸνδε χάρ[ιν θεμένε].  
(CEG 275)

Lady, this first fruit did Menander [ . . . ]

bringing to completion his vow and requiting you with thanks –  
a man from Aegilia, the son of Demetrius, whom [ . . . ]  
please save, daughter of Zeus, giving recognition for these things.

Both εὐχή and the term used by Anacreon and Menander, εὐχολή, can mean either "prayer" or "vow", but whereas a vow can be expected to give a god pleasure, a prayer in itself cannot so obviously be expected to do so. So perhaps the audience of Anacreon fr. 357 *PMG* was expected to infer from κεχαρισμένης that in this case εὐχολή is to be taken as a "vow". But what has been or is being vowed? As the audience waits for illumination, the poem ends with the request that the god accept Anacreon's ἔρωτα. It seems to me that at this point the poet deliberately leaves his audience in

7 Most recently Carey 2009: 35. That other MSS of Dio, *Palatinus Gr.* 117 (P) and *Vindobonensis philos. Gr.* (W) 168, have not δ' but, as the editor suggests to me, δέ τ', may have been seen as supporting the emendation to γ'.

*aporia*. He may be meaning that his relationship with Cleobulus is to be conducted under the watchful eye of Dionysus, just as in Longus' pastoral novel *Daphnis and Chloe* the roguish boy Eros tells Philetas in his garden (as Philetas tells the young couple) that just as he had once watched over Philetas' courtship of Amaryllis, so too he is now shepherding Daphnis and Chloe, νῦν δὲ Δάφνιν ποιμαίνω καὶ Χλόην (Longus 2.5.3–4). Or his meaning may have been resolved by him producing a small terracotta of Eros and placing it at the foot of a herm of Dionysus in the sympotic room. More likely than either of these explanations, in my view, is the solution that the ἔρωτα is to be understood as Anacreon's love song, like the term in the titles of Phanocles' Ἐρωτες ἢ καλοί or Ovid's *Amores*, and that the poet is offering his song as a gift to Dionysus (as well, or course, as a gift and tribute to Cleobulus). But whichever of these understandings of ἔρωτα is correct, the important point is that Anacreon sings words that he knows will not be immediately and uniquely meaningful to his hearers, that audience puzzlement will be generated, and perhaps even that his *sympotai* will spend time discussing what he meant.

It is possible, but perhaps less likely, that this was also the case with a short, polyptotic three-liner dominated by Cleobulus:

Κλεοβούλου μὲν ἔγωγ' ἔρέω,  
Κλεοβούλω δ' ἐπιμαίνομαι,  
Κλεόβουλον δὲ διοσκέω.

(Anacreon fr. 359 PMG)

The first two declarations give no problems: "I desire Cleobulus, I am crazy about Cleobulus". The third is less straightforward. Our manuscripts of Ps.-Herodian who cites these lines offer either διοσκνέω or διὸς κνέων, neither of which is intelligible, or, in the case of the *Venetus*, an explanation that has become its reading διιδεῖν ἐπιποθῶ. Bergk was almost certainly right to correct διοσκνέω/διὸς κνέων to διοσκέω, a word found in Hesychius δ1926 Latte:

διοσκεῖν· διαβλέπειν συνεχῶς τὴν ὄρασιν μεταβάλλοντα [μὴ μεταβάλλοντα Edmonds]. τίθεται δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ διαφορεῖσθαι τῷ σώματι καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ. καὶ τὸ διαπολέσαι, καὶ τὸ διαφθεῖραι.

We seem here to encounter ancient philological bafflement at Anacreon's word διοσκεῖν. Several explanations are offered. One is "to gaze at repeatedly", either "while pretending to look elsewhere" or, if we accept Edmonds' proposal to add μὴ before μεταβάλλοντα, "without looking away". That has never seemed very climactic to me, though it can of course be objected that we have no secure ground for thinking line 3 to be the poem's last line, and that something offering a more effective closure might have followed. Another explanation is "to be physically and mentally exhausted" – if this indeed is how Hesychius' expression τὸ διαφορεῖσθαι τῷ

σώματι καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ is to be understood. The syntax of the sentence Κλεόβουλον δὲ διοσκέω, with an accusative, seems to be to count against this sense, though it is not inconceivable that a language should have a verb which means “to be physically and mentally exhausted *by*”, just as I remember being told in a public lecture by Kenneth Dover that Japanese has a verb (used only by samurai) whose meaning was “to try out the sharpness of one’s sword on a chance passer-by”. Interestingly, both Denys Page in 1960 and Jurek Danielewicz (1999) omitted the third explanation in Hesychius from their apparatus and so exiled it from discussion: καὶ τὸ διαπολέσαι, καὶ τὸ διαφθεῖραι, “to corrupt, to debauch”. If any of the ancient interpretations is right then this one seems to me to be the front runner. But perhaps none of them is right; perhaps Anacreon uses not a rare word but a nonsense word, and wants to leave his audience guessing what the third limb of his polyptoton involves.

The provision of incomplete and tantalising information seems to have been one of Anacreon’s favoured techniques. My last melic case is 347 *PMG*, which I have recently discussed in Bowie 2009: 128–129.<sup>8</sup>

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| καὶ κ[όμη]ς, ἥ τοι κατ’ ἄβρὸν |    |
| ἔσκια[ζ]εν αὐχένα·            |    |
| νῦν δὲ δὴ σὺ μὲν στολοκρός,   |    |
| ἢ δ’ ἐς αὐχμηράς πεσοῦσα      |    |
| χεῖρας ἀθρόη μέλαιναν         | 5  |
| ἐς κόνιν κατερρύη             |    |
| τλημον[.]ς τομῇ σιδήρου       |    |
| περιτεσο[ῦ]σ’· ἐγὼ δ’ ἄσησι   |    |
| τείρομαι· τί γάρ τις ἔρξη     |    |
| μηδ’ ὑπὲρ Θρήκης τυχών;       | 10 |
| οἰκτρὰ δὴ φρονεῖν ἄκου[       |    |
| τὴν ἀρίγνωτον γυναι[κ]α       |    |
| πολλάκις δὲ δὴ τόδ’ εἰπ[εῖν]  |    |
| δαίμον’ αἰτιωμέ[ν]ην·         |    |
| ὦ]ς ἂν εὖ πάθοιμι, μῆτερ,     | 15 |
| εἴ] μ’ ἀμεύλιχον φέρουσα      |    |
| π]όντον ἐσβάλοις θυίοντα [    |    |
| π]ορφ[υρ]έοισι κύμασι[ . . .  |    |

(Anacreon fr. 347 *PMG*)

To state my interpretation more briefly than in my 2009 chapter of *Wandering Poets*, I accept the view that we have here one poem, not two (because we have lost the left hand margin there is no evidence whether or not there was a *paragraphos* after line 10) and I suggest that by emending line 12 τὴν ἀρίγνωτον γυναι[κ]α to τὴν Ἀριγνώτου γυναι[κ]α this poem acquires sense and wit: a beautiful boy, perhaps Smerdies, is the object of Anacre-

8 For a sensitive discussion see Hutchinson 2001: 264–272.

on's sexual interest, and Anacreon purports to be devastated that he has cut his hair; but it is not only the singer Anacreon who displays extreme distress – so (he asserts) does the wife of Arignotus. The poem offers enough information to allow the hearer to speculate on *why* the wife of Arignotus is so immeasurably upset, but it stops short of categorically imputing a relationship between her and the attractive boy. We, Anacreon's audience, can choose to interpret it in this way, but that is our choice.

### 3. The *Theognidea*

A number of elegiac poems in the *Theognidea* also seem to have as their main point the provision of incomplete information that their audience must work to interpret. I shall look at three, and shall mention a fourth. Two of the three come close together in the *Theognidea*, viz. 949–954 and 959–962. They are apparently to do with *eros*. That is also true of 939–942, but I do no more than mention these four lines because, although they open with a puzzle (why is it that the singer represents his capacity to sing as reduced?), that puzzle has been solved by the time we hear the last line (he went to a party and – there, it is implied – his *ἑταῖρος* left him):

Οὐ δύναμαι φωνῇ λίγ' αἰδέμεν ὥσπερ ἀηδών·  
καὶ γὰρ τὴν προτέρην νύκτ' ἐπὶ κῶμον ἔβην.  
οὐδὲ τὸν αὐλητὴν προφασίζομαι· ἀλλὰ μ' ἑταῖρος  
ἐκλείπει σοφίης οὐκ ἐπιδευόμενος.  
(*Theognidea* 939–942)

That these three poems 939–942, 949–954, and 959–962 come so close together might indicate that this part of the *Theognidea* goes back to a collection that privileged poems about *eros* whose meaning was in varying degrees enigmatic, but this is an issue I cannot follow up here. It is amusing, however, to note how Stobaeus navigated his way through these lines, picking out pieces that bore upon *arete* and ignoring those that might be erotic.

That 949–954 is erotic seems likely to many modern interpreters:

νεβρὸν ὑπὲξ ἐλάφοιο λέων ὧς ἀλκὶ πεποιθὼς  
ποσσὶ καταμάρψας αἵματος οὐκ ἔπιον·  
τειχέων δ' ὑψηλῶν ἐπὶ βάς πόλιν οὐκ ἀλάπαζα·  
ζευζάμενος δ' ἵππους ἄρματος οὐκ ἐπέβην·  
πρήξας δ' οὐκ ἔπρηξα, καὶ οὐκ ἐτέλεσσα τελέσσας·  
δρήσας δ' οὐκ ἔδρησ', ἦνυσσα δ' οὐκ ἀνύσας.

9 Cf. Bowie 2010b: 615 (and compare Stobaeus' treatment of 479–628 discussed *ibid.* 605).

All the imagery of these lines is consonant with an erotic interpretation, as was seen by whoever included 949–950 in the homoerotic collection that the Paris manuscript which alone transmits it called “Book 2”, where 949–950 are 1278c and d:<sup>10</sup> the singer had his tender prey in his hands, but he did not exercise the sexual power that he thereby acquired. But much is not said – not simply what form exercising that power might have taken, perhaps something too crude for elegy, but explaining the identity of the unblooded prey/the unsacked city/the unmounted chariot, or what sequence of events had put the singer in his dominating position (something that Archilochus fr. 196a West explains to his audience at some length, no holds barred). Consequently other, non-erotic interpretations have been thought possible. “Quel était ce but ? Il n’y a absolument rien qui l’indique, et ceci a laissé le champ libre aux interprétations les plus diverses” (van Groningen 1966: 362). After offering alternatives to the erotic interpretation van Groningen sighs: “Il faut se résigner à ignorer ce que le poète ne dit pas” (ibid.).

In the next poem, 959–962, the imagery is not so clearly that of *eros*:

ἔστε μὲν αὐτὸς ἔπινον ἀπὸ κρήνης μελανύδρου,  
 ἡδύ τί μοι ἐδόκει καὶ καλὸν ἦμεν ὕδωρ.  
 νῦν δ’ ἦδη τεθόλωται, ὕδωρ δ’ ἀναμίσγεται ὕλει·  
 ἄλλης δὴ κρήνης πίομαι ἢ ποταμοῦ.

What is the “spring”, κρήνη, and what is the “mud”, ὕλις, by which the water has been contaminated? Is the poet singing of his relationship to a group, or to an individual? If he is singing of his relationship to an individual, is the basis of that relationship *eros* or *philia*? Here van Groningen is more assured: “Ici il n’y a pas de doute ; le morceau est érotique” (van Groningen 1966: 364). The absence of doubt would disappoint the singer, I believe.

#### 4. Some Conclusions

So what does all this mean? What sort of relationship should be constructed between this sort of teasing by the provision of incomplete information, and riddles, γρίφοι, and animal fables, αἶνοι, that were developed in the archaic and classical Greek symposium before they became part of Greek book-culture, or with acrostichs, which of course could only be exploited once a literary culture of written texts had developed? If I completed my

10 For the nature of the *Theognidea* in general see most recently Selle 2008, Colesanti 2011; for “Book 2”, Vetta 1980; for the relation of “Book 2” to the main collection see Bowie 2012.

paper by giving full answers to these questions I would be abandoning the practice of teasing to which it has been devoted. But any attempt to sketch a tentative conclusion would have to draw attention to the importance of the provision of incomplete information in the pragmatic impact of riddles and animal fables, and the extent to which archaic and classical sympotic poetry was drawn upon for various purposes by the Hellenistic literary culture in which acrostichs and pattern poems were born.<sup>11</sup>

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11 For two recent discussions of the ways in which archaic poetry is used by Hellenistic see Bowie 2007, Acosta-Hughes 2010.



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## “You Make Less Sense than a (New) Dithyramb”: Sociology of a Riddling Style\*

Pauline A. LeVen

A few weeks after Gildersleeve read Wilamowitz’ *editio princeps* of the longest surviving fragment of late classical lyric poetry – Timotheus’ *Persians* (fr. 791 *PMG*) – he shared his reaction in the *American Journal of Philology*:

In point of fact, we encounter from the start [of the *Persians*] a series of γρίφοι [riddles] such as Greek comedy delights in; and inasmuch as a great deal of our knowledge of antique nauticalities is guesswork, we have riddle within riddle and an Oedipus like Wilamowitz will be welcome to those who hate conundrums.<sup>1</sup>

Besides giving us a vivid snapshot of classical scholarship at the turn of the twentieth century, this passing remark provides a clear insight into one of the striking features of the style of late fifth-century and early fourth-century dithyrambs and kitharodic nomes: their enigmatic diction.

Gildersleeve’s characterization, however, is not representative of the criticism on the style of the New Music.<sup>2</sup> “Vacuous”, “extravagant”, or “obscure” are usually the kind of adjectives that modern scholars have recourse to when describing the language of these virtuoso songs. In that regard, they follow the ancients, who used the proverb “you make less sense than dithyrambs” (διθυράμβων νοῦν ἔχεις ἐλάττωνα) to refer to unin-

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\* My warmest thanks to the organizers of the conference for their hospitality and generosity during this memorable event, which led to many fruitful exchanges.

1 Gildersleeve 1903: 226. He also refers to “solving the puzzle” at 227.

2 On the New Music: Csapo 2004; d’Angour 2006; Fearn 2007: 181–205; Csapo and Wilson 2009; Power 2010: 82–86 and 500–507; Power Forthcoming. As Csapo (2004: 215) and Power (Forthcoming) explain, in the last quarter of the fifth century, the language of the kitharodic nome evolved towards more of “the pathos and volubility of the dithyramb”. In what follows, I do not differentiate between the language of the dithyramb and the language of the nome, and qualify these specimens of New Music by their “dithyrambic diction”.

telligible statements.<sup>3</sup> Aristophanes, the first and most explicit commentator on the style of the contemporary New Music,<sup>4</sup> as well as Plato, Aristotle, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and later critics all qualify dithyrambs in the same way, emphasizing their noise (they are ψοφώδεις),<sup>5</sup> their sound and nonsense (ψόφοι καὶ λῆροι)<sup>6</sup> and their crooked expression (σκολιῶς ἀπηγγέλλοντο).<sup>7</sup> What all of these expressions capture is the sense that the many words and long expressions on which the dithyrambs rely are mere sound, with little content. As opposed to the diction of other poets characterized by their bombast (ὄγκος), such as Pindar, Aeschylus, or Lycophron, the *lexis* of the New Music composers is associated with vacuity and dullness of thought, rather than with richness and depth. The clearest expression of this tendency to not consider neo-dithyrambic language as meaningful is perhaps that of an eminent scholar of the genre, Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, who described the text of the New Dithyramb as “vapid and silly [libretto]”.<sup>8</sup> Since this verdict, the style of these compositions has received little detailed attention.<sup>9</sup>

Yet Gildersleeve’s perceptive qualification of the diction of Timotheus’ *Persians* as riddling invites us to explore another aspect of this style. Riddles (γρίφοι) are meant to be solved, not ignored as mere noisy nonsense: it is precisely because the dithyrambs’ language is not straightforward that it calls for our attention.<sup>10</sup> Taking its lead from Gildersleeve’s

- 3 *Suda* s.v. διθυράμβων νοῦν ἔχεις ἐλάττονα· ἐπὶ τῶν ἀδιανοήτων. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Dem.* 7) describes dithyrambs as κόμπων ὀνομάτων πολλὴν νοῦν δὲ ὀλίγον ἔχοντες (“containing a great din of words with little meaning”). Also Pl.? *Hp. mai.* 292c, again in a metaphoric way: διθυράμβον τοσοῦτον ἅσας οὕτως ἀμούσως (“you sang such a long dithyramb out of tune”), in the sense of “you gave a long response not answering the question” (ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐρωτήματος). For other testimonia about dithyrambic *lexis*, see Ieranò 1997, test. 165–193c.
- 4 For example Ar. Av. 1372–1409. See also further in this paper, n. 17 below. On the parody or mockery of dithyrambic diction in Aristophanes, see Silk 1980; Dobrov and Urios-Aparisi 1995; Dobrov 2002; Barker 2004.
- 5 Arist. *Rh.* 3.1406b2.
- 6 Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 7.
- 7 Herm. in *Phdr.* 238d, p. 55.18 Couvreur (= test. 168a Ieranò).
- 8 Pickard-Cambridge 1962: 51.
- 9 Apart from the description of Timotheus’ style in Wilamowitz’ (1903: 38–55) and Hordern’s (2002: 36–55) commentary on the *Persians*, very few studies have been devoted to the style and language of the New Dithyramb, and those which have usually consist of a list of features (for which see Zimmermann 1992: 118–121). Two exceptions are Brussich 1970 and Csapo 2004. Also Ford Forthcoming and LeVen Forthcoming.
- 10 Clearchus’ definition of a riddle (Ath. 10.448c = fr. 86 Wehrli) emphasizes the heuristic process of reception that they involve: πρόβλημα ἐστὶ παιστικόν, προστακτικὸν τοῦ διὰ ζητήσεως εὐρεῖν τῇ διανοίᾳ τὸ προβληθέν τιμῆς ἢ ἐπιζημίου

11 Even the adjective “dithyrambic” in modern language retains some of the same  
negative connotations associated with the dithyramb by its early critics. *OED*:  
transf. “Resembling a dithyramb in irregularity of style; wild, vehement, boisterous”.

12 On Timotheus’ *Persians*, Wilamowitz 1903; Janssen 1984; Herington 1985:  
151–160; Hordern 2002. Calvié 2010 is a useful reprint of six 1903 French articles  
that followed Wilamowitz’ 1903 publication.

13 For late classical lyric, I use Campbell’s (1993) text and translation. Other transla-  
tions are mine unless otherwise noted.

ῥηξί[κωπ]ος, πάντες [ἐπ]ανέ-  
 πι[πτον] ἐκεῖσε να[ύ]ται· 10  
 εἰ δ’ ἀντίτοχος ἄκτ[ᾶ]  
μῆχ]ος ἄξειεμ [πο]λυκρότο[ιο]  
πλώ]σιμον πεύκας, πάλιν ἐφέροντο·  
 αἰ δ’ ἐ[ὕτ’ ἀν]αἰδῆ γυῖα [δ]ιαφέρουσα[ι  
 πλ]ευρὰς λι[νο]ζώστους ἔφαι- 15  
 νον, τὰς μ[έν, αἰό]λας ὕβρε]ις  
 σκηπτ[ῶν] ἐπεμβάλλ[ο]ντες ἀνε-  
 [χ]αίτιζον...

...bulging heads ... they would sweep away the firwood arms; but if an (irresistible?) oar-smashing blow was inflicted on one side, the sailors would all tumble back there, while if a headland opposite the ships’ sides snapped the sailing device of the noisy pine, back they came again; and when the other ships by tearing apart the (shameless?) limbs revealed the flax-bound sides, the crews would capsize some ships by hurling on them (the flashing outrages of) dolphin-weights...

... 31  
 σμαραγδοχαίτας δὲ πόν-  
 τος ἄλοκα νάοις ἐφοι-  
 νίσσето σταλά[γμασι,  
 κρ]αυγᾶ βοᾶ δὲ [πα]μμι[γ]ῆς κατεῖχεν·  
 ὁμοῦ δὲ νάτος στρατὸς 35  
 βάρβαρος ἀμμι[γ....]  
 ἀντ[ε]φέρετ’ ἐ[π’ ἰχ]θυ[ο]-  
στεφέσι μαρμαροπ[τύχ]ο[ι]ς  
κόλοισιν [Ἀμφιτρί]τας.

...and the emerald-haired sea had its furrow reddened by the drops of naval blood, and shouting mingled with screaming prevailed; and together the barbarian naval host was driven back in confusion on the fish-wreathed bosom of Amphitrite with its shining folds.

...  
 φυγᾶ δὲ πάλιν ἔετο Πέρ-  
 σης στρατὸς βάρβαρος ἐπισπέρχων·  
 ἄλλα δ’ ἄλλαν θραῦεν σύρτις  
μακρ[ω]χενό-  
πλους, χειρὼν δ’ ἔγβαλλον ὀρεί- 90  
ους πόδας ναός, στόματος  
 δ’ ἐξήλλοντο μαρμαροφεγ-  
γείς παῖδες συγκρουόμενοι.

And backwards in flight went the barbarian Persian host, racing along; and various destructions shattered their ships as they sailed the long neck of the sea, and from their hands they dropped their ship’s mountain feet, and from their mouths jumped their bright-shining children, smashed together.

A few stylistic features emerge from this short collection of passages, representative of the style of the song as a whole: the abundant use of adjectives, especially compound adjectives; the combination of poetic figures in

the same clause (personification, metonymy and metaphor); and the puzzling periphrastic expressions, or kennings, that result from the combination of these two processes.<sup>14</sup> Used relentlessly over 240 lines of narrative, they create a very indirect way of depicting a scene; the diction can appropriately be qualified as “riddling”, since it is often unclear to what object (τὸ προβληθέν, to use Clearchus’ term) the poet refers in such an indirect way, and its exact identification is left up to an audience’s interpretation. Yet despite this semantic exuberance, the riddling processes can be reduced to three main strategies.

The first is the creation of long, sustained sequences of images. One technique Timotheus uses to create these sequences is a combination of personification and periphrasis. Throughout the *Persians*, for example, boats and sea are personified, and become actors in the narrative. Thus the oars of the boat are alternatively called “arms” (χεῖρας, lines 5–6), when they are imagined as grappling and striking, and “feet” (πόδας, 91), when they are seen as allowing boats to “walk” on the sea. The periphrastic and metaphoric designations for oars themselves belong to a longer semantic and visual sequence developed throughout the song: land and sea are sometimes opposed, sometimes inverted and sometimes confused. In another periphrasis, oars are called the “sailing device of the noisy pine” (μῆχος πολυκρότοιο πλώσιμον πεύκας, 12–13) in a periphrasis that combines land (πεύκας) and sea (πλώσιμον) elements. The sea itself is described in terms that suggest its similarity with land. In a variation on the Homeric formula ὕγρὰ κέλευθα (“the liquid path”),<sup>15</sup> the sea is called a plain (πεδία πλόϊμα, 78), and compared to a field in which a furrow (ἄλοκα, 32) can be traced. This latest image doubles and inverts another Homeric formula, ἐπ’ ἀτρύγετον πόντον (“upon the unfertile sea”).<sup>16</sup> Conversely, Timotheus turns a drowning Persian characterized as a “land-lord” (a master whose land it takes one day to cross, τις [Φρυγιο]πέδιος ἀνὴρ ἀμεροδρόμοιο χώρας ἄναξ, 40–42) into a vessel (ἔπλει, 45); and the first time dry land is described, it is with a maritime adjective (ἄκταις ἐνάλοις, 98). The analogy continues when the land of Mysia, hailed by her “tree-tressed folds” (δενδροθέτρηι πτυχαί, 106), is described with one of the terms that earlier described the sea “fish-crowned with shining folds” (ἰχθυοστεφῆσι μαρμαροπτύχοις κόλποισιν, 37–38). In the case of this specific semantic sequence, the image is far from gratuitous: the conflation of land and sea encapsulates, at the verbal and visual level, the very nature of

14 On kennings, see Waern 1951 (97–99 for Timotheus).

15 For example *Il.* 1.312, *Od.* 3.71.

16 For example *Il.* 15.27, *Od.* 2.370. For further discussion of the process of inverting or reworking Homeric formulae in Timotheus’ *Persae*, see LeVen Forthcoming.

the battle of Salamis, fought in straits so narrow that a naval battle became a land battle.

This process of creating long strings of visual images throughout a text is facilitated by the use of compounds. As Aristophanes' abusive parody of the New Musician Cinesias in the *Birds* makes amply clear, compounds allow the poet to use the same semantic material in different combinations. Compound adjectives in particular can be used to define the same noun in several overlapping yet contrasting ways.<sup>17</sup> This results in a form of recycling of thought, sounds, and patterns, in an otherwise disorienting text. For example the image contained in *μηχος πολυκρότοιο πλώσιμον πεύκας*, which I have referred to as the "sailing device of the noisy pine" (12–13), is replaced by the image of the "mountain-born pines" (*πεύκαισιν ὀριγόνουσιν*, 76–77), and then by a simple adjective in "the ship's mountain feet" (*ὄρειους πόδας ναός*, 90–91). While one compound adjective taken in isolation might sound merely decorative ("vapid" or "silly" to use Pickard-Cambridge's words) as it often reinforces the meaning inherent in a noun in a quasi-pleonastic way, there is an oral logic, in addition to the visual logic, to Timotheus' strings of compounds and neologisms: the repetition of the same words in different combinations allows weaving the images together in an otherwise overwhelming text, and creates a "texture".<sup>18</sup>

Not all periphrastic or puzzling expressions, however, rely on this principle. The expression "bright-shining children [of the mouth]" for example works according to a different logic. Some critics have understood it as part of the same visual sequence mentioned above (the personification and anthropomorphizing of the boats) and made it the teeth of the ships.<sup>19</sup>

17 Aristophanes parodies this tendency in the *Birds*, 1372–1409: the separate elements of the compound *ἀεροδόνητος* ("air-flitting") first used to describe Cinesias' preludes (*ἀναβολαί*, 1385) appear a few lines later in a different combination, to qualify the brilliant parts (*τὰ λαμπρά*) of his dithyrambs, which are *ἀέρια* ("airy") and *περοδόνητα* ("wing-flitting", 1390). A few lines later, the different elements of the adjective *αἰθεροδόρυμος* ("aether-coursing", 1393) used to qualify birds are reconfigured in *ἁλίδρομος* ("sea-course", 1395b) and *ἁλίμενον αἰθέρος αὔλακα τέμνων* ("cutting an inhospitable furrow in the aether", 1400), with the possibility of an additional oral echo in *ἁλίδρομος* and *ἁλίμενος*.

18 Another example of such a process in the *Persians* is provided by compounds of *φυγή* and *φεύγω*, taken alternatively in their active and passive meaning: *δυσέκφευκτον* 119 and 129, and *καταφυγήν* 120. Another cluster revolves around compounds built on *πορεύω*: *παλίμπορον* 162, *ταχύπορον* 163, *παλινπόρευτον* 173, *ὀπισσοπόρευτον* 182–183.

19 Diels, ap. Wilamowitz 1903: 50. Croiset (1903: 333) suggests that the referent is sculpted figures at the prow; Janssen (1984: 73–74) argues that the teeth in the mouth of the ships are the oars.

Parts of boats, after all, are described as heads (κυρτοῖσι κρασὶν, 4 and cf. σιδαρέωι κράνει, 20), limbs (γυῖα, 14), sides (πλευράς, 15), and the teeth of the ships could be the thole-pins of the boat. But other commentators have proposed to take the expression out of the metaphorical sequence and make it refer to the teeth of the sailors.<sup>20</sup> Rather than belonging to a verbal and visual sequence and relying on a sustained network of metaphorical associations (as was the case with the sea/land metaphor), the expression takes its force, I suggest, from extending the logic of everyday language and images, and activating the latent potential of words through a stretch of the poetic imagination.

A parallel expression in Ion of Chios (fr. 26.4–8 West) may help us better understand both Timotheus' riddle and the manner in which his language proceeds. In a description of a ripening vine, Ion calls grapes "children of the eyes [of the vine]" (ὀφθαλμῶν παῖδες):

ἐξ οὗ βοτρυνέσσ'οἶνὰς ὑπὸ χθονίων  
 πτόρθον ἀνασχομένη θαλερῶ ἐπτύζατο πῆχει  
 αἰθέρος· ὀφθαλμῶν δ' ἐξέθορον πυκτινοὶ  
παῖδες, φωνήεντες ὅταν πέση ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλῳ,  
 πρὶν δὲ σιωπῶσιν.

...from the time when the grape-bearing vine, lifting the bough up from under the earth, reaches out into the high air with flourishing arm; and the crowding children of its eyes jumped out in thick crowd, letting out a voice when one falls on another, though they were silent before.

The image is, as in the case of the boats, based on a personification: the vine is seen as a person, with its branches as arms and its buds as eyes. But there is a second way that the images and language of this passage function. Michael Clarke (2007: 211) has defined the process well:

when the grapes, emerging from these "eyes", are named as "children", a different avenue of verbal imagination must be followed to trace the logic of the words. Greek customarily names the pupil of the eye as a girl, κόρη; the usage is a simple polysemy rather than a living metaphor as such ... . So the second part of the riddle depends on a leap of purely verbal association, working through the polysemy of a word which is not actually heard, but whose presence in the discourse is implied by the use of a neighbouring term in the same semantic field.

The same kind of process is at work in Timotheus' image of the "shining children of the mouth". It is a parallel case of transfer of expressions, a "leap of verbal association" of the same type as the one quoted by Clarke: what the "pupil" is to the eye (a κόρη – girl, female child), the teeth are to the mouth. Unlike the κόρη from which Ion's image derives, this image does not revolve around polysemy, but works according to a type of transfer across realms, from the visual to the aural.

20 Reinach 1903: 68; Hordern 2002.



Finally, one can distinguish a third type of hermeneutic process upon which dithyrambic riddles rely. It is illustrated in a fragment from a dithyramb of the fourth-century BC New Musician Telestes, quoted by Athenaeus (fr. 808 *PMG* ap. Ath. 14.637a):

ἄλλος δ' ἄλλαν κλαγγὰν ἰεῖς  
 κερατόφωνον ἐρεθίζει μάγαδιν  
 πενταρράβδω χορδὰν ἄρθμῳ  
 χέρα καμψιδιάυλον ἀναστροφῶν τάχος.

...and sending forth each a different clamor they were rousing the horn-voiced *magadis*, swiftly turning to and fro their lap-rounding hands on the five-staffed joining of the strings.

For one thing, each line in the Telestian fragment works as a little syntactic unit, which also corresponds to a unit of meaning and does not spill over to the next line.<sup>21</sup> The very simple syntax and the absence of enjambment make it possible to isolate each line as an independent unit of sense, an “intonation unit”.<sup>22</sup> Each noun is modified by a compound adjective that introduces an image: rather than creating a continuous flow of images throughout the passage, as was the case in the *Persians*, each noun is linked to its compound adjective through a metaphorical relationship and encapsulates a little image, quite independent from the rest:<sup>23</sup> the *magadis* has a voice of horn, the joining of strings has five sticks, and the hand completes a *diaulos*-race. But what do the adjectives mean exactly? The last compound, καμψιδιάυλος, establishes a visual analogy between the hand running up and down the strings, and a runner rounding a turning post in a *diaulos* race (καμπτήρ). Scholars have debated the meaning of the second adjective, πεντάρραβδος (“five-rodged”), which Athenaeus takes to mean that the *magadis* has five strings.<sup>24</sup> But the first adjective has caused problems: why “horn-voiced”? Campbell suggests in a note “resonant like the military instrument,” and Gülick proposes that the *magadis* was struck

21 This is in fact true of most other Telestian fragments in the surviving fragments: fr. 805–812 *PMG*. In most of the fragments of the New Music, the difficulty is not at the syntactic level, but at the lexical level: to what do the expressions actually refer?

22 On intonation units: Chafe 1994; Bakker 1997: 89–99, 147–155.

23 These images could, of course, be part of longer sequences, but given the fragmentary nature of the passage, we can only speculate.

24 For a different interpretation, see Barker 1998, who proposes to take the “five-rodged one” as the human hand. This is a tempting hypothesis, especially since it makes a familiar tool (the hand) sound like a technical instrument, and introduces expert discourse and distance to the everyday, without relying on any technical knowledge on the part of the audience. I would add that it might also be taken as a variation on Hesiod’s πέντοζος (*Op.* 742), with ράβδος as a variation on ὄζος. The solution to the riddle would be given in the next line, in χέρα.

by a (horn) plectrum.<sup>25</sup> Both interpretations are difficult to accept, since most critics agree that the *magadis* was a string, not a wind, instrument, and it was plucked, not strummed with a plectrum.<sup>26</sup> I think the meaning of the compound must be sought somewhere else, not so much in the logic of the semantic fields, nor in the logic of language, but in the logic of inter-texts and the use of the poetic tradition.

The participle ἀναστρωφῶν provides the key to the analogy. Ἀναστρωφῶν is a hapax in Homer, used to describe Odysseus' handling of the bow after his return to Ithaca (*Od.* 21.393–395):

ὁ δ' ἤδη τόξον ἐνώμα  
πάντῃ ἀναστρωφῶν, περὶόμενος ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,  
μὴ κέρα ἴπες ἔδοιεν ἀποικομένοιο ἀνακτος.

He was already handling the bow, turning it on every side, making trial of it here and there, lest the wood-worms might have eaten the horn in the absence of the master.

Two Homeric words appear in the Telestian fragment (ἀναστρωφῶν, and the κέρα- compound), and the image of the anxious owner going over the bow and touching it all over (ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα) is evocative of the busy hands of a string player moving back and forth all over the instrument. But perhaps even more important is the comparison between bow and *phorminx* in the next lines of the Homeric passage. When Odysseus tightens his bow, the narrator compares him to a professional *aoidos* who would tighten the string of a *phorminx* (*Od.* 21.404–409):

ἀτὰρ πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς,  
αὐτὶκ' ἐπεὶ μέγα τόξον ἐβάστασε καὶ ἴδε πάντῃ,  
ὥς ὅτ' ἀνὴρ φόρμιγγος ἐπιστάμενος καὶ ἀοιδῆς  
ρῆϊδίως ἐτάνυσσε νέφ' περὶ κόλλοπι χορδῆν,  
ἄγας ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐϋστρεφὲς ἔντερον οἴος,  
ὥς ἄρ' ἄτερ σπουδῆς τάνυσεν μέγα τόξον Ὀδυσσεύς.

But wily Odysseus, as soon as he had lifted the great bow and looked on every side, as when a man expert in the *phorminx* and song easily stretches anew a string around a peg, fastening from both ends the well-twisted sheep-gut string, in the same way Odysseus effortlessly stretched the great bow.

One can see, through this riddling compound, Telestes both showing off his own scholarly knowledge of a Homeric hapax (ἀναστρωφῶν), and providing the *magadis* the authority of a traditional Homeric image. The link between the *magadis* and the voice of horn is of course not immediate: it is only when one develops the intertextual association with Odysseus'

25 Comotti 1983; Barker 1988 and 1998; West 1992: 72–73; Hordern 2000.

26 Unless the *magadis* is a form of *aulos*, as suggested by a few passages of Athenaeus collecting earlier sources: *Ath.* 4.182d–183a; 14.634c–637a, which concludes with our passage of Telestes.

bow that the apparently meaningless “decorative” adjective becomes less puzzling, and a solution to the riddle presents itself: the *magadis* might be called horn-voiced (κερατόφωνον) because, when played, or rather when plucked, it sounds like the released string of a bow made of horn (κέρα).<sup>27</sup>

This possible intertextual use of the compound might remind some of what has come to be associated with “Alexandrian practice” and Hellenistic poetics”, with its emphasis on scholarship and its competitive relationship with the poetic past. Comparing the obscurity of the language of New Music to that of Alexandrian poetry is a useful way to shift our focus from thinking about the style of new dithyramb as mere sound with no meaning, and to begin picturing it as a forerunner to the learned and virtuosic practices of the Hellenistic period.<sup>28</sup> Yet if one thinks of the pragmatics of dithyrambic and nomic performance, songs delivered to exciting music in large theaters, the ingenious “pre-Hellenistic” interpretation of “horn-voiced” in the light of the Odyssean passage might seem quite unlikely. Hearing the compound once, in such a performance setting, would perhaps not instantly bring to the mind of the theater crowd line 394 of *Od.* 21, especially when heard among many other obscure expressions, and with the visual distraction of the performance itself. The experience of the dithyramb’s riddling diction, with no opportunity for an audience to pause and think, is not the same kind of interpretive exercise as one would perform sitting in a library, reading a text with copies of other texts at hand, or hearing them among a group of like-minded erudite deipnosophists, who all gather to display their skill and wisdom, both in producing and consuming riddles, with their eyes on the prize.<sup>29</sup>

27 This reliance on the poetic memory of words is illustrated in many other instances in the corpus of late classical lyric. For examples in the *Persians*, ἀβακχίωτος ὄμβρος (“unbacchic storm”, 62–63) might play with the sympotic associations of wine and sea (on which see Gargiulo 1996), and on the Homeric formula οἶνοντα πόντον (“wine-dark sea”). For the Homeric gloss contained in νεοτευχής (“newly-wrought”, 203, used once in Homer, *Il.* 5.194, applied to Lycaon’s chariots), see Hordern 2002 *ad loc.*, LeVen Forthcoming.

28 In this regard, my argument complements the point made by B. Acosta-Hughes in a chapter on the “Prefigured Muse”, in which he “consider[s] a small selection of moments in Archaic and Classical poetry that not merely prefigure some of the most cited compositional gestures of Hellenistic poetics but are essentially the same gestures, and suggest the need for a nuanced re-evaluation of the literary critical term ‘Hellenistic poetics’” (Acosta-Hughes 2010: 83). Acosta-Hughes quotes a few lines of the *sphragis* of Timotheus’ *Persians*, in which the poet self-consciously gestures at his engagement with the tradition. The lines of Telestes are no less self-consciously intertextual, as I have argued, but they draw the attention less spectacularly onto the process they rely on.

29 See Cleararchus above, n. 10, on the social context of the performance of riddles.

Besides this difference in the conditions of reception of riddles, there is a second difference between dithyrambic riddling practice and learned Hellenistic poetry: the nature of the riddling process itself. The enigmatic style of New Music is never so obscure as to keep crowds away from the general meaning, or to be reserved for a learned, literate, elite.<sup>30</sup> Lycophron's compounds and periphrases (for example) require knowledge of either very specific details of mythology or pointed intertextual details to be intelligible.<sup>31</sup> For late classical nomes or dithyrambs, it is rather the case that certain riddling expressions might make better sense, or find added significance, when seen in the light of a literary reminiscence (as with the "horn-voiced" compound or the "newly-wrought" Muse in the *Persians*);<sup>32</sup> but because the riddle is confined to the adjective, and modifies a noun that is easily understood, the general meaning does not depend on the interpretation of the reference. Rather than obstructing comprehension, the riddling compound adjective adds some optional significance. Even if the intertextual relation between Telestes and *Od.* 21, for example, is not detected, many people could presumably hear something vaguely familiar in κερατόφωνον. The equivalence between a bow and a string instrument was widely established outside the world of the *Odyssey*, and the continuity is made clear by the words κλαγγά and χορδά, which apply both to a bow and a *phorminx*. Even more, the Homeric formulae, or Homeric images on which the dithyrambic expressions rely could have been heard in the very festival context in which a kitharodic nome or a dithyramb was performed. Rather than being part of a learned exercise, or part of one's erudite knowledge, they could have been a freshly heard phrase, a memory shared by all audience-members in the context of the festival. Finally, whether or not one accepts the play with the Homeric hapax, the traditional equivalence between bow and *phorminx* is enough to make one feel the "titillation de l'énigme",<sup>33</sup> and to sense that there is something in the adjective "horn-voiced" that one could get and understand, without quite being sure what. This is precisely the force of dithyrambic "riddling" diction: it is

30 The stringing of the bow in book 21 is one of the most dramatic and memorable passages in the epic and it is likely that even limited knowledge of Homer would include this passage. One can imagine here the same type of layered audience for interpretation of the intertexts as Bing (2010: 149–159) posits for certain types of Hellenistic poetry, in particular epigrams inscribed in busy places. Even a limited knowledge of Homer would be enough to catch the intertextual reference for a hurrying passer-by glancing quickly at the epigram.

31 Cusset and Prioux 2009. On Lycophron's riddles, see also Cusset and Kolde in this volume.

32 See n. 27 above.

33 The suggestive expression is Guilleux' (2009: 225).

never obscure or enigmatic to the point that one would not understand the general meaning, but it creates the feeling that the neologisms and compounds reveal something intriguingly new, in concentrated form, about the object described. It creates for the audience a different relationship between the word and the thing: hearing "horn-voiced *magadis*" is an invitation to mentally run one's hands over the *magadis*, like Odysseus going over his bow, and say "*how* horn-voiced?"

This focus on both the audience's processes of engagement with interpretative problems and on the social dimension of riddle-decipherment, rather than on the poet's or the text's work in creating riddles, is what I want to develop in the rest of this paper. How does riddling language work in a theatrical context, and what kind of interpretive expectations did audiences bring when they went to the theater to listen to the dithyrambic language of New Music? Comedy, another type of performance that shares some of the same audience dynamics as dithyrambs and nomes, sheds some light on the process.

## 2. Middle Comedy and Dithyrambic Style

While underlining contemporary dithyrambic poets' reluctance ever to call a spade a spade, or a flat cake a flat cake, Middle Comedy playwrights both reveal the potential of indirect language to challenge the audience, and hint at the type of reception work it presupposes.<sup>34</sup> In an article on the figure of the cook-poet (μάγειρος ποιητής), Gregory Dobrov (2002: 183) lists 43 passages of Middle Comedy that feature "dithyrambic diction".<sup>35</sup> A major feature of these comic passages, as Dobrov underlines, is the focus on isolated mechanisms of lyric diction, such as the propensity for compounds or for periphrasis. This practice, which Dobrov (2002: 186) calls "lexicalization", allows comic poets to isolate aspects of lyric language, while also appropriating some of its effects for comic purposes.

Most often, comic passages featuring dithyrambic language are rather short, and can be described as "dithyrambic sprinkling". Some of them might be parodies of contemporary dithyrambs, in a manner reminiscent of Aristophanes mocking Cinesias in the *Birds*. This is probably the case with a passage of Antiphanes (fr. 180 *PCG* ap. Ath. 4.169e–f, from the *Parasi-*

34 For the change in attitudes to parody of dithyrambic language, from aggressive criticism in Old Comedy to homage in Middle Comedy: Nesselrath 1990: 249–254. For a different view: see Hunter 1983: 20, for whom the use of dithyrambic language in Middle Comedy was "essentially ... a 'fad'".

35 Already listed in Nesselrath 1990: 254.

*tos*), which imitates some of the same periphrastic diction in Philoxenus' *Dinner-Party* (fr. 836 *PMG*), a long lyric narrative of an elaborate dinner-party.<sup>36</sup> In the comic fragment, the cook describes a cooking pot in the following way:

{A.} ἄλλος ἐπὶ τούτῳ μέγας  
ἦξει τις ἰσοτράπεζος εὐγενής – {B.} τίνα  
λέγεις; {A.} Καρύστου θρέμμα, γηγενής, ζέων –  
{B.} εἴτ' οὐκ ἂν εἴποις; ὕπαγε. {A.} κάκκαβον λέγω.  
σὺ δ' ἴσως ἂν εἴποις λοπάδ'. {B.} ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦνομα  
οἶει διαφέρειν, εἴτε κάκκαβόν τινες  
χαίρουσιν ὀνομάζοντες εἴτε σίττυβον;  
πλὴν ὅτι λέγεις ἀγγεῖον οἶδα.

A. After this will come another large one, as big as the table, a noble – B. What are you talking about? A. child of Carystus, born of the earth, boiling – B. Tell me! Spit it out! A. I'm referring to a *kakkabos*; you might perhaps refer to it as a *lopas* ("casserole-dish"). B. Do you think the name makes any difference to me, if some people like to call it a *kakkabos*, or a *sittubos*? But I understand you're referring to a vessel.

Here Antiphanes is playing with the distance between an everyday thing (a pot) and the riddling diction and specialized words used to describe it. If he parodies Philoxenus' *Dinner-Party*, his is an astute reading of the poem, as Philoxenus' composition emphasizes the importance of the containers as much as that of the food they hold (lines 9–15):

ἐπ' αὐτῷ

δ' ἄλλο παρήλθε τόσον, βατὶς δ' ἐνέην ἰσόκυκλος· 10  
μικρὰ δὲ κακκάβι ἦς ἔχοντα τὸ μὲν γαλεοῦ τι, ναρκίον ἄλλο ( )  
...  
θερμὸς μετὰ ταῦτα παρήλθεν  
ἰσοτράπεζος ὄλος νήστις συνόδων πυρὸς ( )  
ῥέπειτα βαθμοῦς† ἀτμίζων ἔτι... 15

After it, another arrived, equally big, with a perfectly round skate on it; and there were small pots (*kakkabia*), one with a piece of dogfish, another with a ray... next arrived hot a whole empty-bellied bream, as big as the table, ... fire ... steps (?) ... still steaming...

This description (from which Antiphanes might borrow the adjective *ἰσοτράπεζος*, big as a table-top, and the reference to *κακκάβια*, cookpots), has been introduced by some lines with a programmatic flavor. The narrator of the Philoxenian poem has described the dishes (3–5):

ταὶ δὲ πρὸς ὑψηλὸν χυλὸν ἔστιλβον αὐγὰς  
εὐστέφανοι λεκάναις παροψίσι τ' ὀξυβάφων (τε) πλήθει σύν τε χλιδῶσαι  
παντοδαποῖσι τέχνας εὐρήμασι πρὸς βιοτάν, ὑνυχᾶς δελεασματίοισι.

36 Text and translation of this fragment and the comic fragments below are from Olson's Loeb. On the passage, see also Wilkins 2000: 340–363.

...and those tables gleamed in the lamplight high above, laden with plates and side-dishes and a pile of saucers and reveling in every skilful invention for good living, enticements for the spirit.

Just as the lyric poet makes saucers, pots and pans a topic of *ekphrasis* and gives them to an audience to see under a new light – as “skilful invention for good living, enticements for the spirit” and products of a τέχνη – the cook, who himself possesses a τέχνη, shifts the emphasis from the dishes as mere containers to the dishes as interesting objects in themselves. By contrast, for the master listening to the cook in the Antiphanes passage, periphrases only stand in the way of communication (εἶτ’ οὐκ ἂν εἴποις; ὕπαγε), and synonyms are an over-refinement that obscures meaning (ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦνομα οἶει διαφέρειν ... πλὴν ὅτι λέγεις ἀγγεῖον οἶδα). The master actually goes further, and finds the generic term (“vessel”) as useful as the specific one (“cooking pot”). In this context, the dishes to which the cook refers are a literalization of the “vehicle” for food: both poet and cook are sensitive to poetic and earthen “vehicle” while the literally minded master is more interested in gastronomic and linguistic “tenor”.

One could cite several other (ostensible) parodies of specific lyric passages in which the gastrolyric figure of the μάγειρος offers commentaries on contemporary poetry. Yet it is unlikely that all of the 43 passages listed by Dobrov were parodies or *ad hominem* attacks. So how do they work in a comic context, and what is their function? One longer fragment from Antiphanes’ *Aphrodisios* (fr. 55 PCG ap. Ath. 10.449b–d) throws an interesting light on the mechanics of production, and reception, of dithyrambic language. It is an exchange that reproduces, in several of its aspects, the mechanics of the passage quoted above. In this dialogue, the first character, probably a cook again, uses periphrastic, metaphoric and enigmatic expressions, while the interlocutor, probably his master, complains about the use of this complicated language for everyday things:

- {A.} πότερ’ ὅταν μέλλω λέγειν σοι τὴν χύτραν, (χύτραν) λέγω,  
 ἢ τροχοῦ ρύμαισι τευκτὸν κοιλοσώματον κύτος,  
 πλαστὸν ἐκ γαίης, ἐν ἄλλῃ μητρὸς ὀπηθὲν στέγῃ,  
 νεογενοῦς ποίμνης δ’ ἐν αὐτῇ πνικτὰ γαλακτοθρέμμονα,  
 τακερόχρωτ’ εἶδη κύουσιν; {B.} Ἡράκλεις, ἀποκτενεῖς 5  
 ἄρά μ’, εἰ μὴ γνωρίμως μοι πάνυ φράσεις κρεῶν χύτραν.  
 {A.} εὖ λέγεις, ξουθῆς μελίσσης νάμασιν δὲ συμμιγῇ  
 μηκάδων αἰγῶν ἀπόρρουν θρόμβον, ἐγκαθειμένον  
 εἰς πλατὺ στέγαστρον ἀγνῆς παρθένου Διοῦς κόρης,  
 λεπτοσυνθέτοις τρυφῶντα μυρίοις καλύμμασιν; 10  
 ἢ σαφῶς πλακοῦντα φράζω σοι; {B.} πλακοῦντα βούλομαι.  
 {A.} Βρομιάδος δ’ ἰδρώτα πηγῆς; {B.} οἶνον εἰπέ συντεμῶν.  
 {A.} λιβάδα νυμφαίαν δροσάδῃ; {B.} παραλιπὼν ὕδωρ φάθι.  
 {A.} κασιόπουν δ’ αὔραν δι’ αἴθρας; {B.} σμύρναν εἰπέ, μὴ μακράν,  
 μηδὲ τοιοῦτ’ ἄλλο μηδέν, μηδὲ τοῦμπαλιν λέγων, 15

ὅτι δοκεῖ τοῦτ' ἔργον εἶναι μείζον, ὥς φασὶν τινες,  
αὐτὸ μὲν μηδέν, παρ' αὐτὸ δ' ἄλλα συστρέφειν πυκνά.

A. When I'm about to mention the cookpot to you – should I say “a cookpot” or “a hollow-bodied concavity, forged under the impulse of a wheel, moulded of earth, baked in a separate chamber sprung from its mother, and pregnant with casserole, milk-nourished portions of a new-born flock, tender-fleshed forms”? B. Heracles! You'll be the death of me, if you don't refer in a perfectly intelligible way to a “cookpot full of meat”. A. Very good. Should I refer to “a curdled mass that flows from bleating she-goats, mingled with streams spawned by a tawny honeybee, nested in a broad wrapper belonging to Deo's sacred virgin daughter, and luxuriant with countless fine-textured veilings”; or should I describe it clearly to you as “a cake”? B. I prefer “a cake”. A. “The sweat of Bromius' spring”? B. Keep it short – say “wine”! A. “A dewy nymphaic font”? B. Drop that and use the word “water”! A. “A cassia-breathing trans-ethereal waft”? B. Say “incense”; don't stretch it out, and don't say anything else like that – or the opposite, either; because this looks like a lot of work, to talk like some people do, not actually naming anything, but putting together a mass of other words that allude to it.

In each of the examples, after the cook proposes flowery periphrases for mundane objects and substances, the master acts as literary critic and suggests ways of trimming the excess of words. At one level, the use of dithyrambic diction allows the cook to show off his knowledge, and the actor to deliver a virtuoso passage: it is a *pnigos*, a passage that would have invited applause from the crowd.<sup>37</sup> But the comic passage also demonstrates the process of learning how to decipher riddles.<sup>38</sup> In the first instance, the cook first refers to the object (a cookpot), and then gives the choice between two forms of expression, the simple and the riddling one. The audience can appreciate how a simple object takes on fantastic characteristics: it is a real paradox, an *adynaton*, combining incompatible characteristics, both material and human – it is “scorched” in a different chamber from its “mother”, and “pregnant” with a “new-born”. In the second instance, the cook still gives a choice of expression, but instead of stating from the start the object he is about to describe, he begins with the riddling phrase, and then offers the simple expression. This allows the master to have a chance first to practice his newly acquired riddle-decrypting skill, before being given the answer. In the last two cases, the cook only gives the riddling expression, and the master, by now a riddle-expert, supplies the answer.<sup>39</sup>

On another level, the whole exchange underlines the inappropriateness of elevated language to the commonness of the item described – as if pe-

37 The following paragraph is indebted to Professor Danielewicz' comments during the conference, where he delivered a breathless, and much applauded, reading of Antiphanes' “choker” passage.

38 Nesselrath 1990: 257–259.

39 The last riddles might parody a passage of Timotheus' *Cyclops*, fr. 780 PMG.



riphrasis had no merit of its own and merely illustrated a speaker’s inability to speak concisely. But in the comic context, high language contributes to the inversion of social roles. High language for everyday things contributes not only to “bringing fantasy to the familiar”,<sup>40</sup> but it also allows norms to be inverted: the cook is the one who displays the expert technical language, while the master prefers the more down-to-earth vocabulary.<sup>41</sup> One can extend the master’s reflections beyond the comic context: while he emphasizes that this language is “a lot of work” for the speaker, he does not say anything about the difficulty for the audience. Quite the opposite: far from being baffled by the periphrases, the master, at least in this passage, gets the solution every time.

The active involvement of an interpreter actually extends beyond the stage. As Nesselrath has pointed out, the use of riddling style by comic characters contributes to engaging not only the protagonists, but also the audience of the comedy in the process of interpretation, as if spectators were racing with the comic protagonist to get the answer to the puzzle. What is important is the kind of social dynamics, both on stage and between stage and audience, which allows the audience to assimilate itself with the clever – or powerful – character. When the master gets the answer, the audience can identify with him, or even compete, if they come up with a better, or different, answer.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. The Prize of Participation

If we now return to the language of the dithyramb in its performance context, its enigmatic character takes a new meaning. As the parallel with dithyrambic language in comedy suggests, riddling language in New Music songs rewards as much effort as one puts in. This is a seemingly straightforward observation, but one that nonetheless deserves further examination in two respects.

The first has to do with the actual aesthetic experience of the performance, and has been explored, to some extent, by Eric Csapo in a superb study of the politics, sociology and poetics of New Music. According to Csapo, one of the features that influenced the style of New Music was its material cause: the greater reliance, in theatrical music, on the *auloi* (the

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40 Silk 1980, especially 137–146.

41 Dobrov 2002: 174–182, for the cook’s expertise and association with the “riddle as a very specialized form of sophistry” (176).

42 Nesselrath 1990: 241–280. For an explicit statement: “der Zuschauer im Theater erhält sozusagen die Gelegenheit mitzuraten, bis die Auflösung kommt” (257).

double-pipe).<sup>43</sup> Because of the instrument's ability to produce much sound and sustain long phrases, the New Dithyramb developed a type of syntax that corresponded to this musical feature. The nature of most of the riddles highlighted above is a consequence of the ability of the text, following the music of the *auloi*, to sustain long sequences of visual, and oral, patterns. Building on Csapo's analysis, we can observe more specifically, in the case of Timotheus' *Persians* for example, how a text often establishes a series of parallels, and repeats the same riddling process over a long semantic sequence, with the result that it is *precisely* through following the flow of the song, rather than in isolating expressions, that images come into clearer focus for the auditor, and that signification becomes more immediate. It is through, and not in spite of, the tight packing of images and the continuous flow of riddles that the general picture created by the narrative can emerge, not straightforwardly, but as the result of a multiplication of small images. The *poikilia* (variegatedness) often associated with the musical features of the dithyramb and nomes is a good way of understanding the superposition of small images, bewildering by themselves, but whose repetition and superposition all contribute to sketching in a larger picture. The text creates its own grammar of a riddling style, which is unique to each composition. This grammar of literal object and exotic metaphor varies according to narrative context, but mastery of it is in any case a requirement for interpreting the riddles in each individual text: one's ability to grasp the meaning of a visual or verbal sequence is commensurate to one's willingness to immerse oneself fully in the logic of the images throughout the song.

In connection with this linguistic aspect, Csapo's article also underlines a more psychological element: the ability of the *auloi* to rouse emotions and bypass reason in an appeal to the senses and feelings.<sup>44</sup> In this context, one can attribute the aforementioned instinct to explore "other venues of verbal imagination" to the effect of the music. It is only by bypassing reason that some features of this enigmatic style can be understood. To follow the logic of the language, one must embrace the enthusiasm and loss of control that the music inspires; one must allow oneself to become susceptible to a novel poetics whose goal is to achieve freshness of expression by making the familiar strange. Many of the effects of the riddling processes discussed above (such as the "children of the mouth" or even "horn-voiced *magadis*") rely on the audience's willingness to free-associate, to let go of strict logic and allow its imagination to take over.

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43 Csapo 2004: 217.

44 Csapo 2004: 226.

The second aspect has to do with the cultural significance of the process of riddle-solving. It is possible to identify a form of cultural continuity and exchange between two riddling practices, that of the symposium and that of the theater stage. Once again, a passage of Middle Comedy is particularly illuminating. The fragment comes from a comedy by Amphis, probably composed in the second half of the fourth century and intriguingly entitled *Dithyrambos* (fr. 14 *PCG* ap. Ath. 4.175a–b). Of the two characters in the dialogue, the first one is probably a musician:

{A.} ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν γίγγραν γε τὸν σοφώτατον.  
 {B.} τίς δ' ἔσθ' ὁ γίγγρας; {A.} καινὸν ἐξεύρημά τι  
 ἡμέτερον, ὃ θεάτρῳ μὲν οὐδὲ πώποτε  
 ἔδειξ', Ἀθήνησιν δὲ κατακεχρημένον  
 ἐν συμποσίοις ᾗδ' ὅτι. {B.} διό τι δ' οὐκ ἄγεις  
 εἰς τὸν ὄχλον αὐτόν; {A.} διότι φυλὴν περιμένω  
 σφόδρα φιλονικοῦσαν λαχεῖν τιν'· οἶδα γάρ  
 ὅτι πάντα πράγματ' ἀνατρίανώσκει κρότοις.

A. But I . . . the *gingras*, the cleverest instrument there is. B. What's a *gingras*? A. It's a new discovery of mine, which I never put on display in the theater, although it's being used now at the drinking parties in Athens. B. Why don't you introduce it to the population generally? A. Because I'm waiting for a tribe that really wants to win the prize to draw my name; for I know it'll turn everything upside down like a trident with the applause it gets.

While Wilson emphasizes the elitist attitude of the character who waits for “the optimum moment to introduce the *gingras* to the Athenian theatre and so achieve its riotous upheaval”, I think there is a remarkable parallel between the situation of the *gingras* and that of riddling style: as this exchange and the figure of the poet-cook show, both the instrument and the process of riddle-making allow the playwright to bring, vicariously and symbolically, “tit-bits from the cultural riches of the upper-class private world of pleasure into the world of the theater”.<sup>45</sup> Having vicarious access through the public stage to the *gingras* and to the riddling style allows a theater audience to remotely “play the symposiast”. While the spectators do not themselves perform, the characters, instrument and language displayed on stage allow them to participate indirectly in the world of the symposium, with its music and its riddle-solving game – with all of its empowering pleasure, and without the anxiety of publically getting it wrong. While the audience of comedy might enjoy having access to the riddling style through the figure of the clever cook, there is, in the case of the dithyramb and kitharodic nome, no intermediary figure to interpret the riddles: they are laid out for open participation, for anybody who is willing to engage with them. The main difference from the world of the symposi-

45 Wilson 2000: 69–70.

um is that the stakes are not apparent and there is no obvious winner: there is no kiss, no crown, no cup for the one who solves the problem, which, paradoxically, makes dithyrambic riddles a much more private spectacle than those of the symposium.

Both in the hermeneutic way they function, and in the relationship they establish between the song and the audience, dithyrambic riddles share aspects in common with other types of enigmatic language. Some of the processes I have highlighted are reminiscent of the learned riddling diction of a Lycophron, as they rely on the knowledge of earlier texts and on the poetic culture of the audience. But there is something specific to the social dynamics of the stage that dithyrambic riddling diction establishes: rather than listening to a language of revelation or a specialized knowledge which only resonates with a select few, the audience of dithyramps and nome (as the comic parodies make us realize) is asked to take part actively in the construction of meaning, using a few elementary linguistic and poetic strategies, and with the great help of a music which frees the imagination. This makes for a communicative practice that is empowering for the audience, as it relies on anybody's participation rather than exclusion on the basis of knowledge or class. This socio-cultural interpretation of the dynamics of riddling style justifies the sense of democratic threat that Plato perceived in this kind of entertainment: if there is no prize in the end, it is because what really counts, for once, is participating.

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# Magic Squares, Alphabet Jumbles, Riddles and More: The Culture of Word-Games among the Graffiti of Pompeii\*

Rebecca R. Benefiel

Early in the nineteenth century excavations of Pompeii there came to light a painted inscription that read: *Suilimea Cissonio fratribiliter sal.* The message featured attractive red lettering and the easily understood but theretofore unattested adverbial form: *fratribiliter*. It was of sufficient interest that the plaster was excised from the ancient wall, and it was removed to the Naples Archaeological Museum where it remains well preserved today (fig. 1). As this painted message of greetings was among the earliest wall-inscriptions to be documented in the excavations of Pompeii, the editors of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* initially explained the name *Suilimea* as a cognomen. As we shall see, however, that hypothesis was eventually revised as more inscriptions came to light.

This essay explores word-play and *technopaegnia* among the vibrant and energetic culture of ancient wall-inscriptions in Pompeii. Word games, riddles, and linguistic play did not take place only in elevated literary contexts, nor were they indulged in solely by the social elite. The abundance of archaeological material preserved in ancient Pompeii shows, instead, that enjoyment of word-play and mental acrobatics radiated deep through ancient society, even among the populations of smaller towns across the Empire. The variety of examples that are attested epigraphically at Pompeii point to a broad and active culture of word-games taking place during the early Roman Empire.

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Fig. 1: SVILIMEA CISSONIO FRATRABILITER SAL (CIL 4.659)

### 1. Archaeological and Epigraphic Context

No archaeological site gives us a better look into popular culture during the early Empire than the site of ancient Pompeii. The destruction of this town and the surrounding areas by the eruption of Mt Vesuvius in AD 79 resulted in an excellent preservation of the wall-plaster that covered nearly every building in the city – along with the thousands of writings and messages that were inscribed upon it. Pompeii has yielded a total of more than 13,000 wall-inscriptions so far, although more have been lost and approximately one-third of the city remains unexcavated.<sup>1</sup> This is an overwhelming number of writings for a city whose population is estimated to have been around 10,000 inhabitants. These wall-inscriptions, also called graffiti, take two main forms: (1) painted inscriptions, which were usually notices of public interest, and (2) incised inscriptions, spontaneous messages that could be written by anyone on the street with a sharp object and the desire to write something.<sup>2</sup> The wall-inscriptions in Pompeii are not confined to a particular type of building or to any one geographical area, but

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- 1 Volume 4 of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* records the textual parietal inscriptions from Pompeii and surroundings. Martin Langner (2001) has catalogued the figural graffiti and drawings from Pompeii and from sites across the ancient world.
  - 2 A smaller number of inscriptions were written with charcoal. For a good overview concerning wall-inscriptions at Pompeii, see Franklin 2007 and 1991.



are found in both private and public spaces and throughout the length of the city.<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting these ancient wall-inscriptions were not intended to deface, as is often the case with modern graffiti; instead, this mass of inscribed messages reveals a broadly shared interest in writing and reading.

The widespread popularity of writing on the walls seen in Pompeii may have been spurred on by what was happening in the public sphere. The surge of public monumentalization of text that occurred during the early Empire appears to have been paralleled by an explosion of interest in creating one's own textual message on the part of the broader populace. Thousands of graffiti preserved in Pompeii illustrate this burgeoning interest and feature far more than names, greetings, and drawings; they also offer a view into popular word-games of the day and clever compositions in different formats that were designed to show off the writer's wit, intellect, or facility with language. This paper will highlight three examples of such word-games: magic squares, alphabet jumbles, and riddles.

## 2. Magic Squares

The best-known example of wordplay from Pompeii may be the famous ROTAS-SATOR magic square.<sup>4</sup> This five-line square of text has been referred to as "magic" for a number of reasons, chief among which is that it is the same when read horizontally or vertically, from the beginning or the end:

ROTAS  
OPERA  
TENET  
AREPO  
SATOR

The fame of this text stems from a deduction that by rearranging the letters of this five-line square, one could spell out the phrase *Pater Noster* twice. This is possible if one rearranges the phrases into one vertical and one horizontal line, intersecting to share the central letter N. The rearrangement is not perfect – four letters are left over once the phrase *Pater Noster* is spelled out: the two letters A and two of O. But once a Christian tone had already been associated with this group of letters, with a reference to the

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3 For recent analyses of wall-inscriptions in public and domestic contexts, see Levin-Richardson 2011 (graffiti in the brothel), Benefiel 2010a (in the House of Maius Castricius), and Benefiel 2010b (in the House of the Four Styles).

4 The bibliography on this square is immense. Some of the most important treatments include: Guarducci 1965, Hofmann 1978, and Varone 1979.

prayer of “Our Father”, the remaining pairs of A and O were explained as references to the alpha and omega. A Christian reading behind this scramble of letters thus created a new arrangement as follows:

|   |                       |   |
|---|-----------------------|---|
|   | P                     |   |
|   | A                     |   |
| A | T                     | A |
|   | E                     |   |
|   | R                     |   |
|   | P A T E R N O S T E R |   |
|   | O                     |   |
|   | S                     |   |
| O | T                     | O |
|   | E                     |   |
|   | R                     |   |

This reading was speedily embraced and, even though strong arguments have been made against it, fascination with the idea that this writing might point to an extremely early (and hidden) Christian message continues to hold today, particularly in non-academic quarters.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, this is not the only magic square in Pompeii. Three versions of this five-line square have been found. The magic square that has generated the liveliest discussion was found inscribed in the campus beside the amphitheater. Another version was painted onto the façade of the Praedia of Julia Felix at II.4, and a third, fragmentary example was discovered inside the House of Paquius Proculus at I.7.1.<sup>6</sup> In that house, the square was one of nearly seventy graffiti, including messages that point to individuals visiting from Rome.<sup>7</sup> And this may be a clue as to how the word square reached Pompeii. Rather than Christians traveling in secret to spread their message, particularly at such an early date when Greek was the language of the young church, these word squares were probably passed along through social interaction and the regular movement of people. Popular poetic verses appear to have circulated throughout the towns of the empire in a similar way.<sup>8</sup>

Another version of a magic square, this time consisting of four lines, was also found at Pompeii:<sup>9</sup>

5 The easy transmission of information through the internet and blogs means that theories about the Sator square can spread far and quickly. A google search for “sator square” returns about 30,200 results (retrieved 7 June 2012).

6 *CIL* 4.8123: [---] | [t]enet | [a]repo | [sa]tor. (The very bottom of letters were visible in the line before *tenet*. *CIL* includes a line-drawing.)

7 Cf. Benefiel 2010c: 54–55, and Franklin 2001.

8 Cf. Kruschwitz 2006, Milnor 2009.

9 *CIL* 4.8297, inscribed on the façade of the House of the Menander at I.10.4.

ROMA  
OLIM  
MILO  
AMOR

Like the ROTAS-SATOR square, this one presents palindromes and was designed to be read back and forth, up and down. The ROTAS square has at times been interpreted as conveying an entire sentence: “The sower Arepo holds the wheels with effort”. The four words in this group, however, demonstrate that there need not have been a full sentence contained within the magic square; it was sufficiently fascinating to be able to read horizontally or vertically, from the left or right.

The reference to Rome may have supplied the genesis for this square since the word *Roma* could so easily be read from right to left as *amor*. It was not too difficult then to come up with a four-letter word beginning with an O for the next line, *olim*. The third line, *Milo*, reveals the shortcut possible for finishing the square – a personal name. The word *Arepo* in the five-line word square seems to fulfill the same function. Although *arepo* fits in the series, it is not a Latin word found elsewhere and attempts to compose a full sentence from the five-line word square have explained it as a personal name.<sup>10</sup>

This play with the construction of language appears to have been broadly appealing. The four-line ROMA-AMOR square is found not only in Pompeii but also at Ostia and in Spain.<sup>11</sup> With its larger size, the five-line ROTAS-SATOR square must have proven even more fascinating; it has been found so far at six sites across the ancient world.<sup>12</sup> How many more word squares were produced and entertained is impossible to say, but the potential to create additional examples was there.

Magic squares are known in Greek too. In fact, one word square in Greek came to light recently and was published by Roger Bagnall only last year. Excavations in the substructures of the basilica at Smyrna have yielded two fragmentary examples of the same version, both dating to the second century AD. These two versions appear in different bays, and may suggest that the writer was trying to work out the format as he inscribed the text. This Greek word square also consisted of five lines. It too could be

10 Cf. Gwyn Griffiths 1971, who proposes that the name is of Egyptian origin. Guarducci (1965: 222–228) also summarizes the earlier attempt of Carcopino to explain *arepo* as of Gallic origin, and to connect it with *aratrum*.

11 *CIL* 4.8297; Guarducci 1965: 265; and *IRBaelo* 00102, respectively.

12 In addition to Pompeii, these include: *AE* 1934, 0010 (Dura Europus); *AE* 1956, 0063 (Aquincum); *AE* 1975, 0493 (Portugal); *AE* 1979, 0387 (Britain); *AE* 2002, 0583 (Comum).

read horizontally or vertically, but unlike the Latin square, this was not also a palindrome. It reads:<sup>13</sup>

MΗΛΟΝ  
ΗΛΟΝΗ  
ΛΟΓΟΣ  
ΟΝΟΜΑ  
ΝΗΣΑΣ

These word squares demonstrate that at Pompeii the purpose was not to rearrange the letters into another visual shape;<sup>14</sup> instead, the fascination with these word squares seems to stem from the possibility of reading in different directions.

### 3. The Alphabet

The ability to read backward and forward takes a different twist when it comes to writing the alphabet. Numerous handwritten examples of the alphabet grace the walls of Pompeii and have inspired the argument that children were the instigators behind many of the city's graffiti. The editors of *CIL* vol. 4 first made such an assertion; the presence of alphabets among the city's graffiti has subsequently been explained as the work of children practicing their letters.<sup>15</sup>

Yet the idea that these wall-inscriptions were produced by children copying out the alphabet does not correspond with the archaeological material. First, the alphabet is only rarely copied out in full. And in places where it is, like the Casa del Sacello Iliaco, it does not appear to be the work of children. Here, the text is written where renovations were taking place in order to alter a doorway. The alphabet appears in the wet plaster around the new door frame; perhaps the fresh surface, which would soon be painted over, appealed to someone who decided to write something, and the alphabet was simply what came to mind. Judging from the height of the inscription, it was an adult, not a child, who created it.

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13 Bagnall 2011: 17–18.

14 Some have suggested that the rearrangement of the word-square into intersecting vertical and horizontal lines could be interpreted as a cross. Cf. Guarducci 1965: 222–223. Antonio Varone offers the most comprehensive and cogent explanation of this issue. The potential rearrangement of letters into vertical and horizontal lines was a modern discovery, reached independently by three scholars in the 1920s. Other rearrangements are possible as well, but have no bearing on the original composition of the square. Cf. Varone 1979: 53–71, esp. 61.

15 *CIL* vol. 4 p. 164.

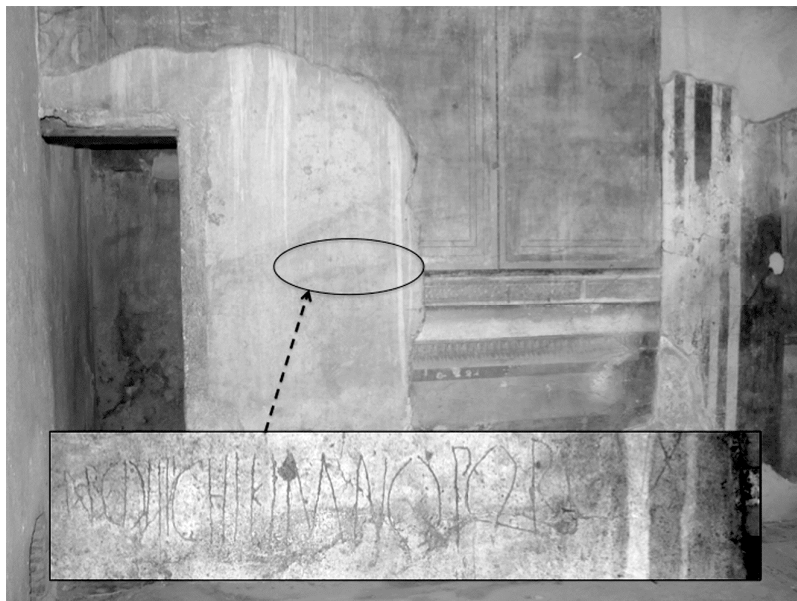


Fig. 2: The alphabet inscribed on a wall during renovations in the Casa del Sacello Iliaco

Secondly, if a person was practicing his or her letters, we might expect to find the alphabet repeated, as it is on papyri, where such exercises are found.<sup>16</sup> In Pompeii, however, single instances of the Roman alphabet are inscribed. Only one spot features an alphabet copied out several times, and there it does seem that some person was learning the alphabet. But in that particular location, near the kitchen in the House of the Menander, the alphabet was being written not in Latin, but in Greek.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, if these texts do not represent children practicing their letters, they do point to tasks of mental agility. In particular, more than ten graffiti present what at first glance might appear to be a jumble of letters, which I have termed alphabet jumbles. One example from the Vico del Panettiere reads: AX[-]VCTD.<sup>18</sup> In other locations this series continues further, and

16 Cf. Cribiore 2001.

17 The beginning of the Greek alphabet is copied out eight times (*CIL* 4.9275a–h) near the kitchen in the House of the Menander at I.10.4. *CIL* 4.9275e is the only instance in which the alphabet is written out in full; the other examples all feature only the beginning of the series. Three other graffiti featuring the beginning of the Greek alphabet are found nearby (*CIL* 4.9274a–d).

18 *CIL* 4.3219.

reveals that the alphabet jumble is created by writing the alphabet from both the beginning and the end simultaneously. The writer begins with A, then moves to X at the very end of the alphabet, then returns to B, then heads back to the end and to the letter V, again back to the beginning for the letter C, and so on. Another example appears in the Casa del Centenario at IX.8.3,6 where it seems as if someone was trying to work out this braided version. The very end of the alphabet (RSTVX) is copied out, with the full jumbled series then written out below: AXBVCTDSERFQ-GPHOINKML.<sup>19</sup>

These word squares and alphabet jumbles thus have something in common: they rely on a certain flexibility with language and a willingness to ignore strict linear progression in order to more fluidly read – or think – backwards and forwards.

#### 4. Riddles in the Basilica

Riddles too form part of the culture of wordplay among the wall-inscriptions of Pompeii. Two graffiti identify themselves as riddles, beginning with the heading, *zetema*. Both messages were inscribed in the basilica, a location that featured a great deal of originality among the large number of messages inscribed here.

Public buildings in Pompeii were not free from graffiti. The 16,000 sq ft basilica on the town's forum features some 200 graffiti, and ranks alongside the purpose-built brothel and the campus beside the amphitheater as one of the most heavily inscribed spaces in the city. The bulk of these graffiti were found not on the façade but on the *interior* walls of the building, which were decorated in brightly colored first-style painting.<sup>20</sup> The main course of the decoration consisted of two large panels between engaged columns and painted black (see fig. 3). The majority of graffiti were inscribed here, in the bottom half of this main course – a comfortable height for someone standing next to the wall to write.

19 *CIL* 4.5499.

20 Incised and painted wall-inscriptions were discovered on the exterior walls of the building as well, but the exposure to the elements on the outside of the basilica likely resulted in these being preserved in worse condition, and likely contributed to the loss of others. Cf. *CIL* 4.1774–1777, with the note at 1774: *In eo muro praeter has multae extant inscriptiones, sed, ut in corroso tectorio, mutilatae et oblitteratae omnes.*

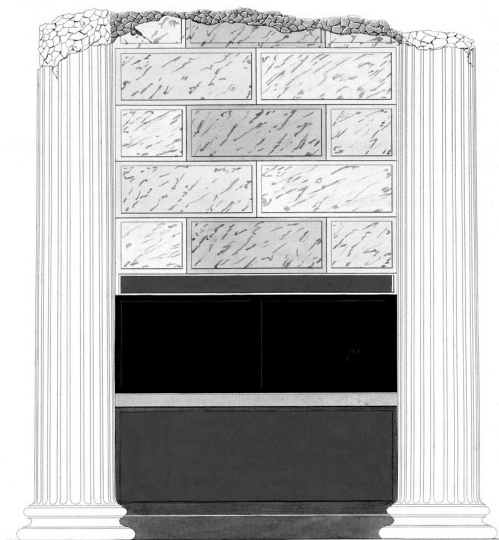


Fig. 3: Decorative scheme of the interior walls of the basilica.  
From Mazois 1829: pl. 21, fig. 1

The graffiti in the basilica contain a vast range of topics, from expressions of love to sketchy drawings, from well-known maxims to the city's oldest dateable graffiti that stated Gaius Pumidius Diphilus "was here" in 78 BC.<sup>21</sup> Many of the messages in this building are multiple lines, longer than usual for ancient graffiti. And numbers of writers signed their names here, either in greetings to friends or as a coda to their message, like Narcissus who signed off with "Narcissus wrote this" after his quotation of a line from book two of Vergil's *Aeneid*.<sup>22</sup>

The overwhelming number of messages and the large amount of poetry among the graffiti in the basilica so impressed early visitors to Pompeii that in 1841 nineteen large panels of wall-plaster were detached from the walls and removed to the archaeological museum in Naples. They remain there well preserved and in good condition today. It is therefore possible to view at first hand the two riddle messages as they are inscribed.

The two messages are inscribed in the same area, in the lower left hand corner of a panel, and are written one above the other. Each begins with the

21 CIL 4.1842: C • Pumidius • Dipilus • hic fuit | a(n)te) • d(iem) V • Nonas Octobreis • M • Lepid • Q • Catul co(n)s(ulibus).

22 Aen. 2.148 = CIL 4.1841: Quisquis es amissos hin[c iam ob] | liviscere Graios | scribit Narciss(us).

word ZETEMA, centered and on its own line above the rest of the text. The form of the letter E differs in the two messages, suggesting that the messages were written by different hands.<sup>23</sup> The content makes clear that the lower message, tucked into the very corner of the panel, was meant to be read first. It reads:<sup>24</sup>

ZETEMA

Mulier ferebat filium similem sui

Nec meus est nec mi similat sed

Vellem esset meus

Et <sup>ego</sup> voleba(m) ut meus esset.

In the last line, the final *-m* of the main verb, *voleba(m)*, is not written; this characteristic occurs in other graffiti at Pompeii too, revealing that the final *-m* was already being nasalized and that Latin was already a step closer to the Romance languages.<sup>25</sup> The writer, however, recognized the possible confusion with this form *voleba(m)t*, however, and inserted the word *ego* in small letters above the verb to make clear what the subject of the sentence should be.

Without the heading of *zetema*, it might not be obvious that this text is a riddle. Nor is the answer to the riddle immediately apparent. Archer Taylor grouped the message with riddles concerning family relationships, but suggested that it probably had to do with a pun on *sus* (“pig”), while Karl Schenkl had earlier offered the answer that the woman was to be identified with *ousia* (*pecunia*), and the son was *tokos* (*fructus*).<sup>26</sup> A third possibility might be that the key lies in the word *meus*, which might be understood as indicating a father-son relationship (“I wish he were my [son]”) but could also be taken in an erotic sense (“I wish he were mine”).

In any case, someone appears to have figured out the answer. The message above this graffiti says as much. Although it similarly begins with the heading of *zetema*, instead of offering another riddle, it goes on to say, “s/he solved the riddle” (*zetema dissolvit*). The subsequent line of that message, however, does not give the answer and unfortunately is none too transparent. *CIL* offers the following reading, which I cannot improve up-

23 The two different forms of E are clearest in the word ZETEMA that begins each text. In the lower text, the letter E is written as a vertical stroke with three horizontal crossbars. The upper message includes a different style for the letter E, yet one that was equally common among Pompeii’s graffiti; here the E is created by two vertical, parallel strokes. Considering the grain of the wall-plaster, it was probably easier to incise this second form.

24 *CIL* 4.1877.

25 Väänänen 1959.

26 Taylor 1938; Schenkl 1886.



on: *Lacris amala pateto bic arabicae | ente*.<sup>27</sup> Then, after a space, additional text offers vocabulary that is more easy to understand: *linge mentula est*. This was written after the preceding text and may have been inscribed by a different individual. I propose that the final *-m* for the accusative ending of *mentula* was not written out, as occurred in the other graffito nearby, and that this writer intended: *linge mentula(m) est*, “it (i.e. the answer) is, lick the prick”.

The motivation behind that contribution is not as important here as it is to recognize that multiple people were reading and answering the riddle inscribed on the basilica wall. The difference in the formation of the E in the two *zetema* graffiti already suggests that the person who wrote that “s/he solved the riddle” is not the same individual who posted the riddle in the bottom corner of the panel. The *vacat* between the continuation of the upper graffito and the last three words, along with the fact that those final words appear to be more deeply incised into the plaster, suggests that a third person wrote the final phrase, *linge mentula est*. These inscribed contributions above the original graffito prove that people were reading the riddle and puzzling it out. Some even added their own comment, but others would have read it without leaving a trace.<sup>28</sup>

## 5. Inscribed Wit in the Basilica

Graffiti elsewhere in the basilica further testify to the penchant of Pompeians to inscribe messages meant to show off their learning or wit on the walls of this building. One eventual series of graffiti began when an individual paired one elegiac couplet from Ovid’s *Amores* with another from the poetry of Propertius. The two sit together nicely because both treat the same subject: the *exclusus amator*. Written in beautiful cursive script, and visually represented as lines of poetry with the pentameters of each couplet indented, the full inscription reads:

Surda • sit • oranti • tua • ianua • laxa • ferenti  
 audiat • exclusi • verba • receptus [a]man[s].  
 (= Ov. Am. 1.8.77–78)

27 For one explanation, please see the suggestions of Professor Danielewicz in this volume.

28 Additional riddles taking the form of handwritten graffiti have been discovered in the cities of Cyrene and Smyrna (Kaster 1984 and Bagnall 2011, respectively). In Smyrna, two graffiti beginning with the heading ZETEMA, like those in Pompeii, were similarly found in the town’s basilica.

Ianitor • ad • dantis • vigilet • si • pulsat • inanis •  
 surdus • in • obductam • somniet • usqu[e] seram.  
 (= Prop. 4.5.47–48)

Below these four lines stands another elegiac couplet written in a different hand. It conveys another thought on love and is taken from Ovid's *Ars amatoria*. Yet while the previous verses had been accurately reproduced from the poetry of Ovid and Propertius, it is evident that this writer was struggling to recall the verse precisely. He or she writes:<sup>29</sup>

quid pote tan • durum saxso aut • quid mollius unda  
 dura tamen molli saxsa cavantur aqua.

As inscribed, the couplet begins with *quid pote(st) tan durum saxso* ("what can be so hard as rock?") instead of Ovid's *quid magis est saxo durum?* ("what is more hard than rock?"). At that point, however, the writer appears to remember that *saxum* should be in the ablative, and thereafter correctly quotes the rest of the couplet. He writes phonetically, forming the sound of the *x* with the letters *xs* (*saxso*, *saxsa*).

It is clear that the person who quoted the *Ars amatoria* here did so after the joint Ovid-Propertius message had been posted, because the opening words *quid pote tan...* were inscribed first to the left of the four-line graffito. That message was left unfinished when the writer determined that not enough space remained to complete the text. He then began again below the four-line graffito and was able to write out in full both lines of his Ovidian quotation.

Then someone else was inspired to make his own contribution to the conversation. Adding two more lines to what had now become a series of elegiac couplets, directly below the quotation from the *Ars amatoria*, he wrote:<sup>30</sup>

ubi • perna cocta • est • si • convivae apponitur  
 non gustat pernam lingit • ollam • aut • caccabum.

In appearance, these two lines look just like the six lines above them (see fig. 4), written in cursive and with the second line indented, but when one reads this addition to the group, it is clear that this author is making a different kind of statement. Instead of quoting a verse of well-known literature, this writer contributed his thoughts on the tastiness of pork. The statement catches the reader off guard and perhaps even elicits a laugh.

29 CIL 4.1895 = Ov. *Ars* 1.475–476.

30 CIL 4.1896.



Fig. 4: A series of poetic verses in the basilica (CIL 4.1893–1896)

The impact of this final addition to the series relies on the fact that people would be reading these messages written on the walls. The character of the graffiti in this building, their originality, and the variety made it worthwhile to do so. The myriad of messages in the basilica also suggest this was a place where the public might take the opportunity to show off – one’s learning or sense of humor.

## 6. Suilimea and Friends

If we then return to our original painted inscription conveying greetings, we see that it belongs within this wider culture of wordplay at Pompeii. Suilimea is not a cognomen but represents the name Aemilius written backwards. Aemilius issued greetings to his friend Cissonius with brotherly love but also with a challenge for him, and for any other observer who passed this message painted in large letters on a busy thoroughfare. These greetings rely on the education of the reader, requiring him not only to be able to read but even to be able to read backwards.

Aemilius Celer was the name of one of Pompeii’s *scriptores*, the men whose job it was to paint messages on the town’s walls for public con-

sumption.<sup>31</sup> These messages included advertisements for gladiatorial games and the hundreds of political campaign posters found throughout town. Another painted inscription just to the right of the greetings to Cissonius also contains the name Suilimea. It presents a long string of initials, which, with patience, can be correlated to the names of three separate political candidates. This context strongly suggests that our Suilimea should be identified with Aemilius Celer.<sup>32</sup>

It makes sense that a *scriptor*, whose job was to work with letters, may have begun to play around with the building blocks of his trade. The formulaic nature of many of the wall-inscriptions he posted may have led an intellectually active and curious individual to try reading and eventually writing in a different way, not only left to right but also right to left. Yet playing around with language was not restricted to those whose daily job dealt with writing. Hamillus, Sabinus, and Curvius also inscribed messages in which they wrote their names backwards.<sup>33</sup> Their messages similarly contained greetings or professions of love, content that shows they were writing not just for themselves but that they meant for their messages to be read by at least one other.

The graffiti of Pompeii thus testify to an active culture of writing and reading, not solely for the purpose of communication but also for simple enjoyment. Inscribed word-games, riddles, even improvised adjustments to popular poetry all highlight the rich variety among the wall-inscriptions of Pompeii and testify to a culture of playful literacy and mental activity among the wider population under the early Roman Empire.

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31 For more on Aemilius Celer, see Della Corte 1965: 306–307. Franklin (1978) discusses several other of these *scriptores*.

32 *CIL* 4.660: *P • P • P • A • V • C • F* [---] | *M • E • S • Q • M* [---] | *SVILIMEA* • [---]. Additionally, not every resident would have had easy access to paint supplies. Nor would they necessarily have the skill to produce lettering of such a high quality while wielding such materials.

33 *CIL* 4.2400d–g, 3710–3711.

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## II. The Ancient Riddle: Theory and Practice





## What Has It Got in Its Pockets? Or, What Makes a Riddle a Riddle?

Christine Luz

In the depths of the Misty Mountains when Bilbo Baggins is confronted with Gollum's murderous jaws, which give him little hope for mercy, the two engage in a riddle contest. For a while things go rather well for the hobbit but then he becomes more and more nervous at the sight of his opponent's apparently increasing impatience and hunger. While racking his brain for a new riddle he asks himself absentmindedly what it is he has in his pockets. Gollum, though immediately protesting that this is not a fair question, is obliged to accept it as the next riddle and starts guessing what it could be, far from suspecting at the time that it is the very object on which the livelihood of the one and the life of the other depend. The question was not meant to be a riddle when first uttered as it was not recognised as such by its recipient, and only his desperate plight urges Bilbo to insist on an answer. Gollum's failure to guess it leads to Bilbo's escape, and once more the fatal ring changes its possessor by way of treachery. The episode from J. R. R. Tolkien's tale about the little hobbit shows that – according to its author at least – not all questions are riddles, and that riddles have clearly recognisable and generally acknowledged features, which constitute their formal appearance.

If Tolkien's distinction between riddles and “non-riddles” can be taken as a rule which applies to riddles in general, we would expect it to be reflected in the ancient riddles that have come down to us. In the following discussion I will focus on book 14 of the *Greek Anthology* as preserved in the Palatine manuscript,<sup>1</sup> which contains by far the largest extant collection of ancient Greek riddles.<sup>2</sup>

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1 The book in question is now preserved in the *Cod. Par. suppl. Gr.* 384, the part of the *Anthology* manuscript which stayed in Paris when the first part was returned to Heidelberg in the early nineteenth century. The date of the original compilation of the collection and more so of the individual riddles is rather difficult to establish. Some must go back as far as the classical or even archaic periods, e.g. the famous

The 150 poems of the fourteenth book of the *Greek Anthology* can roughly be divided into three groups of about equal size. The first group contains oracles, most of them modelled on a historical situation;<sup>3</sup> others are of more general import.<sup>4</sup> The second group are arithmetical problems where a total sum has to be calculated from given fractions.<sup>5</sup> Finally the third group consists of riddles in our sense. For the present purpose I will focus on this last group.

All riddles of the fourteenth book of the *Greek Anthology* have in common that they are metrical. This is perhaps not surprising as they appear in a collection of epigrams. However, metre is not an indispensable criterion for a literary product to be included in the *Anthology*: the same book 14 contains a prose oracle;<sup>6</sup> furthermore, Planudes includes in his version of the *Anthology* a few palindromes, which are not metrical.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the instances where ancient riddles survive in prose form are but a few.<sup>8</sup> We may therefore assume that although metre is not an indispensable requirement for ancient riddles, most of them were preserved in verses, and in particular those included in the collection of the *Greek*

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riddle of the Sphinx (*Anth. Pal.* 14.64; cf. *Ath.* 10.456b), whereas others may well be Byzantine. Cameron (1993: 207–216) argues plausibly that already the anthology of Cephalas from the ninth century is likely to have included a section on riddles. On Planudes see Cameron 1993: 135 and 208.

- 2 Further riddles can be found in Cougny's appendix to the *Palatine Anthology* (Cougny 1890: 563–578), who gathered them from various manuscripts and texts like Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*. A helpful collection moreover is Schultz 1909–1912; see also Ohlert 1912. On the Latin side, of particular interest is the compilation transmitted under the name of Symposius, probably from the fourth century AD; see Shackleton Bailey 1982 and Sebo in this volume. For lack of space I concentrate here on the riddles of the *Greek Anthology*.
- 3 A few oracles are taken from Herodotus, cf. e.g. the prophecy to Croesus about his mute son (*Anth. Pal.* 14.79; *Hdt.* 1.85) or the oracle to the Athenians about the wooden wall (*Anth. Pal.* 14.93; *Hdt.* 7.141).
- 4 E.g. *Anth. Pal.* 14.70–71 or 14.74.
- 5 Among the arithmetical problems there are recurring types, such as the theft of apples or nuts which are distributed in unequal shares among several persons, and one has to find out how many there were at the beginning (e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 14.3; 116–120); a fountain being filled by several pipes of different capacity (e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 14.7; 130–133; 135); the division of property among relatives (e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 14.51; 122–123; 128; 143).
- 6 *Anth. Pal.* 14.95; cf. *Hdt.* 7.169.
- 7 Cf. *Anth. Plan.* 387b–c Beckby (387b–d Aubreton-Buffière).
- 8 Cf. e.g. the Sphinx riddle in the version of Ps.-Apollod. 3.5.8. *Ath.* 10.452c cites from Clearchus (fr. 94 Wehrli) the famous Eunuch riddle mentioned as early as Pl. *Resp.* 5.479c in a slightly distorted form which shows a disregard for its originally iambic form; cf. also *schol.* Pl. *Resp.* 5.479c (Clearch. fr. 95a Wehrli).

*Anthology* were metrical since in this shape they fitted best into the epigram collection.

Apart from metre we can observe a series of characteristic features, which are shared by a large part – sometimes all – of the riddles in the *Anthology*. The poems use certain recurring devices to disguise their solutions, which can be summarised in the following points:

## 1. Metonymy/Analogy

Many riddles describe their object in terms that are taken from a different sphere of life so that it appears as if the poem were speaking about something other than it actually is. The following poem illustrates this technique:

εἷς ἄνεμος, δύο νῆες, ἐρέττουσιν δέκα ναῦται·  
εἷς δὲ κυβερνήτης ἀμφοτέρας ἐλάει.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.14)<sup>9</sup>

There is one wind, two ships; ten sailors are rowing,  
And one helmsman steers them both.

The poem describes two ships, which are driven by one wind and ten rowers. So far we are not astonished, since it seems quite natural for ships, which – as we assume from their being mentioned together – are moving close to each other, to be blown by the same wind; perhaps we might hesitate a little as to how to understand the activity of the rowers – are they to be divided into two groups each belonging to one vessel? The second line, which tells us that the two ships are navigated by only one helmsman, is more puzzling. This rather implausible circumstance draws the reader's attention to the fact that something is wrong with the image depicted and invites him to search for an explanation of the poem's meaning. Indeed, what it is describing is not a ship at all but a double flute: its two bodies correspond to the two vessels, the helmsman to the player, the wind to his breath, and the rowers to his fingers. The poem draws a picture taken from the sphere of seafaring and creates as many similarities as possible to the object it actually means: the flute is a narrow and oblong wooden object as is the ship; the flute player like the helmsman is in charge of and controls its movements or activity which is caused by means of wind (or breath respectively). Finally the rowers and fingers have the same task: they perform the helmsman's commands in order to fulfil the object's purpose,

9 I follow the edition of Beckby 1968 and sometimes refer to Buffière 1970. Michael Squire suggested that this distich could be seen as a pattern poem: each line represents one of the flutes and the initial word εἷς the mouthpiece where they touch.

which is in the case of the ship to move forward over the water, in the case of the flute to produce music. The carefully chosen analogies are drawn from a field the reader is familiar with and constitute together a (on the whole) consistent picture in which every detail has a parallel in the object it actually represents.

Another example of this kind of technique is the following poem attributed to Cleobulus:

εἷς ὁ πατήρ, παῖδες δυοκαίδεκα· τῶν δὲ ἐκάστω  
παῖδες (δὶς) τριάκοντα διάνδιχα εἶδος ἔχουσαι·  
αἱ μὲν λευκαὶ ἔασιν ἰδεῖν, αἱ δ' αὖτε μέλαιναι·  
ἀθάνατοι δέ τ' εὐοῦσαι ἀποφθινύθουσιν ἅπασαι.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.101)

There is one father and twelve children; of these each  
Has twice thirty daughters of different appearance:  
Some are white to look at and the others black in turn;  
They are immortal and yet they all fade away.

The poem pretends to describe three generations of a family tree but again the image only serves to disguise what is really meant: the grandfather represents the year, his sons the twelve months, and their daughters the days and nights of the months; their different colours refer to the light of the days and the darkness of the nights respectively. As in the previous poem the analogy between the circumstance described and the one it is referring to is drawn as closely as possible: the blood relationship indicates that, like the family members, the year, months, and days are of the same nature, i.e. they are all units of time. The sequence of generations is paralleled by the fact that the year can be divided into the twelve months and these in turn into the thirty days and nights, so that each time-unit “generates” – as it were – the next smaller one. Again the riddle uses an image from a different field, which corresponds in several respects to the object it is actually describing and so qualifies to stand in its stead.

The third example uses more traditional forms of metonymy:

Ἦφαίστῳ ποτὲ Παλλὰς ὑπ' ἀγκοίνῃσι δαμείσα  
εἰς εὐνὴν ἐμίγη Πηλέος ἐν θαλάμοις·  
τοὶ δ' ὥς οὖν λιπαρῇσι καλυφθήτην ὀθόνησιν,  
αὐτίκ' ἐγεννήθη νυκτιπόλος Φαέθων.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.53)

Conquered by Hephaestus' embraces was Pallas once  
United with him in bed in the chambers of Peleus (Pelos);  
As they both were covered with shining linen  
Quickly night-roaming Phaethon was born.

As often in poetic texts the names of divinities represent objects that are particularly dear to the god in question and can stand for his or her emblem. Thus Pallas Athena represents olive oil, Hephaestus fire, Phaethon

light. The poem describes a clay lamp (the chamber of *πηλός*, clay), in which oil and fire united by a wick of linen produce light.

Again as in the first example the poem itself raises our suspicion as to its meaning. The picture it describes is consistent as such and yet its claim that the virgin goddess Athena should be found in bed with Hephaestus seems rather unlikely. Puzzled by this implausibility the reader is invited to question the poem's trustworthiness and challenged to look for a different meaning.

The metonymic use of divine names is rather common among the riddles of the *Anthology* collection: *Anth. Pal.* 14.25, for instance, uses "sun" and "moon" for Apollo and Artemis.<sup>10</sup>

All three poems discussed above describe their object by means of an analogy taken from a different sphere of life, with which the reader can be expected to be familiar. That means that the poem's actual object is replaced by another object or circumstance with which it has features in common. The reader's task is it to decode the single pieces of information he is given and to put them together in a new whole in which again every single detail, as well as their overall appearance, makes sense. If he succeeds in doing so, he will have found the solution to the riddle.

The way the poems use metonymy or analogy as a method of disguise can be compared to a poetic simile where we find the same way of illustrating "something" by "something else" with which it shows certain – more or less close – parallels. There is, however, a difference in the way the simile and what it is compared to on the one hand and the riddle and its solution on the other are formally connected: a simile is a comparison which is usually introduced by a linguistic marker whereas in a riddle we have to guess that the object or scene described is not to be taken literally but represents something else. None of the three riddles above – and this is generally the case with the riddles in the *Anthology* – contains any formal introduction which would reveal its nature or an instruction which tells us what we are supposed to do with it.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Pun/Double Meaning

A further method of disguise common to a number of poems in the riddle collection of the *Greek Anthology* is the use of words with double meaning so that they seem to say one thing in the context of the poem whereas in fact they mean something else. A word which occurs repeatedly in this use

<sup>10</sup> See also below on *Anth. Pal.* 14.109.

<sup>11</sup> However see below on the distinction between *γρίφος* and *αἴνigma*.

is κόρη seemingly in the meaning of παρθένος in its primary context but actually to be understood as “pupil” or as *pars pro toto* “eyeball”.

ἐν πυρὶ κοιμηθεῖσα κόρη θάνεν· ὁ προδότης δὲ  
οἶνος· ὅφ’ οὗ δὲ θάνεν Παλλάδος ἦν στέλεχος·  
ὁ κτείνας ναηγός· ἐνὶ ζώντι δὲ τύμβῳ  
κεῖται μεμφομένη τὰς Βρομίου χάριτας.  
Παλλὰς καὶ Βρόμιος καὶ ὁ κλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις  
οἱ τρεῖς τὴν μούνην παρθένον ἠφάνισαν.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.109)

In the fire a sleeping maiden was killed; the traitor  
Was wine; by what she died was the trunk of Pallas Athene.  
The murderer was a shipwrecked sailor; she lies in a living tomb  
Blaming the gifts of Bromius.  
Pallas, Bromius and the famous lame one,  
The three destroyed a single girl.

This rather confusing scene represents the blinding of the Cyclops by Odysseus from book 9 of the *Odyssey*. The “trunk of Pallas” is the olive stem Odysseus and his companions heat in the fire and use for the blinding; the “living tomb” is the eye socket. Once the double meaning of κόρη is understood, the rest becomes rather easy to guess. In addition to the pun on the word κόρη the poem also makes use of the kind of metonymy mentioned above: in the rather pathetic last distichon we find three divinities made responsible for the killing; their names stand for the olive trunk, the fire, and wine, all three already mentioned earlier.

Κόρη in this double meaning is again used in *Anth. Pal.* 14.52, where the same scene from the *Odyssey* is referred to in a list of characterisations of wine. Furthermore, we could understand the word κούρα in *Anth. Pal.* 14.5 in the same way.

A second type of double entendre of this kind, which occurs more than once in our riddle collection, is the use of letters in their quality as numbers. A pair of riddles, for instance, claim that if you add one hundred to fire you get the name of a Greek hero:<sup>12</sup>

εἰ πυρὸς αἰθομένου μέσσην ἑκατοντάδα θείης,  
παρθένου εὐρήσεις νῖεα καὶ φονέα.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.20)<sup>13</sup>

If you put one hundred into the middle of burning fire,  
You will find the son and the killer of a maiden.

12 Cf. also *Anth. Pal.* 14.105 for Σ in the meaning of 200.

13 *Anth. Pal.* 14.21 contains almost the same riddle with a slightly different wording; e.g. it uses Ἡφαίστοιο instead of πυρός, which makes the riddle more difficult to solve as the word which is needed to make the pun possible has to be supplied first.

The pun only works if we keep the genitive of  $\pi\tilde{\omega}\rho$  as it stands in the poem rather than the nominative. If we add to the middle of this form the letter *rho* (100 in the Greek system of numeration), we obtain the name of Pyrrhus or Neoptolemus, Deidameia's son by Achilles, who is according to some versions of the myth<sup>14</sup> the killer of Polyxena. Παρθένος in the pentameter refers to both women. The second line gives additional – though not very specific – information to identify the hero, which is based on his mythical career.

### 3. Paradox

A very common feature of the riddles in book 14 of the *Greek Anthology* is the use of paradoxical formulations. As we have seen in the lamp riddle or the flute riddle, implausible or straightaway impossible declarations alert the reader to the fact that he is dealing with a riddle. It is therefore not surprising that paradoxical phrases are one of the most common features of riddles both ancient and modern.<sup>15</sup>

The following poem may serve to illustrate this phenomenon:

μὴ λέγε καὶ λέξεις ἐμὸν οὖνομα. δεῖ δέ σε λέξαι;  
ὥδε πάλιν – μέγα θαῦμα – λέγων ἐμὸν οὖνομα λέξεις.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.22)

Do not speak and you will speak my name. Or do you need to speak?  
Again – a great miracle! – by speaking you will say my name.

The poem itself stresses the astonishing nature of its claim by the insertion μέγα θαῦμα in the second line: both speaking and remaining silent amount to the same result. The solution to this paradox is “silence”: if you do not speak, you produce silence; if you say the word “silence”, you still produce its name and thus express the phenomenon.<sup>16</sup> The riddle is based on the circumstance that “silence” is at the same time a word, which can be spoken, and the absence of speech.

A further example of the same technique is the following poem:

οὐδεὶς βλέπων βλέπει με, μὴ βλέπων δ' ὁρᾷ·  
ὁ μὴ λαλῶν λαλεῖ, ὁ μὴ τρέχων τρέχει·

14 Cf. e.g. Ibyc. fr. 307 *PMGF*; Eur. *Hec.* 523–568.

15 As an example for a modern riddle that uses the same technique let us mention just one from the contest between Bilbo and Gollum mentioned above: “Voiceless it cries, | wingless it flutters, | toothless it bites, | mouthless it mutters”. Answer: the wind.

16 This solution is not undisputed (see Buffière 1970 *ad loc.*), but it seems the most plausible known to me.

ψευδὴς δ' ὑπάρχω, πάντα δ' ἀληθῆ λέγω.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.110)

No one who looks, sees me; though who does not look, sees.  
Who does not speak, speaks; who does not run, runs.  
I am a liar and yet I can tell all truth.

The poem contains a list of contrasts. It juxtaposes activities that seem to exclude each other: who looks does not see, who does not speak speaks, who does not run runs, etc. Again the reader is puzzled by this seeming nonsense until he can think of something that can indeed achieve all this. The solution is ὄνειρος, “dream”. Someone who sees, i.e. has his eyes open, cannot see a dream; someone who is asleep and therefore does not look, on the contrary can. The same goes for the second line where the sleeping person does not move or speak, but can do these things in his or her dream. The last line describes the nature of ὄνειρος itself: dreams are unreal, that is, they can be said to be lies; at the same time they can as a form of divination reveal truth. The poem makes use of the contrast between the state of being awake and the state of sleeping and dreaming. While asleep the human mind can dream of activities, which the sleeping body is not capable of performing although it feels to the dreamer as if it could. Hence we get the series of παράδοξα the riddle is based on. As in the previous example the composer has again succeeded in finding an object which can be described in ambiguous expressions and contradicting terms.

And a final example to illustrate this use of paradox:

εἰςὶ κασίγνηται δύο' ἀδελφεαί· ἡ μία τίκτει  
τὴν ἑτέραν, αὐτὴ δὲ τεκοῦσ' ἀπὸ τῆσδε τεκνοῦται,  
ὥστε κασιγνήτας οὖσας ἅμα καὶ συνομαίμους  
αὐτοκασιγνήτας κοινῇ καὶ μητέρας εἶναι.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.40)

There are two sisters and siblings; one gives birth  
To the other, and the one that gives birth is also born from the other,  
So that they are sisters of the same blood;  
Blood related siblings both and mothers at the same time.

This poem relies less on direct opposites as the two previous ones than on a situation that is impossible if taken literally: nobody can be her own sister's mother or daughter. As in the riddle about the year, months, and days, *Anth. Pal.* 14.101, the family relationship has to be understood metaphorically: it denotes things that are of the same kind or nature. The two sisters stand for ἡμέρα and νύξ (both feminine in Greek, hence sisters): they grow out of one another so that neither takes precedence over the other. Thus



they remain sisters, i.e. equal in nature and state, and yet “generate” each other.<sup>17</sup>

These three poems characterise their objects in terms that contradict the rules of common sense and the recipient’s experience of what he knows to be normal or plausible. This use of paradox is particularly striking in these three riddles as they have chosen objects whose nature is such that it can be described entirely in this manner. However, the use of paradox is not restricted to riddles with solutions of this kind. On the contrary, most riddles of the collection in the *Greek Anthology* contain in one way or another paradoxical expressions as part of the descriptions of their objects.<sup>18</sup> This device is particularly attractive for riddles as it gives them a puzzling air, which both confuses the recipient and at the same time alerts him as to their ambiguous meaning. The composers of the riddles seem keen to exploit this device of paradox as it adds to the mysteriousness of their productions.

#### 4. Myth

Some of the most striking παράδοξα occur in riddles about mythical characters. One of the most puzzling descriptions of the whole collection is the following portrait of Andromache:

ἄνδρ’ ἐμὸν ἔκταν’ ἔκυρός, ἔκυρὸν δ’ ἔκτανεν ἀνὴρ  
καὶ δαῖρ ἐκυρὸν καὶ ἔκυρός γενέτην.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.9)

My husband slew my father-in-law; my father-in-law slew my husband;  
My brother-in-law slew my father-in-law and my father-in-law my father.

The solution of the riddle presupposes a good knowledge of the mythical career of Andromache. Her first husband, Hector, was killed by Achilles, who became her “father-in-law” when she was later united to Neoptolemus, who in turn had killed her first father-in-law, Priam. The second line refers to Andromache’s brother-in-law Paris, who killed Achilles, who on his part had killed her father Eetion. The rather complicated family history of the unlucky Trojan heroine makes the riddle’s confusing description of

17 The same situation seems to be the solution of the following riddle, *Anth. Pal.* 14.41, despite McCartney’s suggestion that it might refer to the moon, cf. Buffière 1970 *ad loc.* The unequal length of the two characters seems to refer to the change of the relative duration of day and night in accordance to the seasons rather than the moon phases.

18 Cf. e.g. “I lose my light because of light” (*Anth. Pal.* 14.47); or, “I speak without tongue” (*Anth. Pal.* 14.56). Cf. also the other examples discussed here, in particular the myth examples below.

the interrelation of the killers and their victims possible. Unless the reader realises who in this medley is who, he will find it hard to make sense of it.

Other riddles similarly challenge the recipient's proficiency in mythical matters by exploiting mythical details and relations. So does, for example, the following poem:

κτανθεὶς τὸν κτείναντα κατέκτανον· ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν οὐδ' ὧς  
ἦλυθεν εἰς Αἴδην· αὐτὰρ ἔγωγ' ἔθανον.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.32)

Having been killed I killed my killer; nevertheless he did not  
Come to Hades, whereas I have died.

Again we find a rather confusing situation where the victim of a murder slays his killer in return but perhaps without real success since the killer never finds his way into Hades. The figures in question are Heracles and Nessus, with whose blood the former was poisoned. Heracles' death led to his immortalisation so that the centaur never saw him enter the underworld. As in the previous example the riddle relies on the recipient's knowledge of myth, without which he cannot solve the paradoxical claim of the poem.

Mythical murders are a rather popular topic among the riddles of book 14 of the *Anthology*. Here is another poem which describes such an event in a similar style to the two previous ones.

κτεῖνα κάσιν, κτάνε δ' αὖ με κάσις, θάνομεν δ' ὑπὸ πατρός,  
μητέρα δ' ἀμφοτέρωι τεθναότες κτάνομεν.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.38)

I killed my brother and he in turn killed me; we died because of our father;  
And we both killed our mother by dying.

The speaker is one of the two sons of Oedipus, who killed each other in consequence of their father's curse and whose deaths provoked their mother's suicide. Once more the intricate lot of the house of Laius provides a writer with material for his composition, though here not for the reason of its tragedy but because of its enigmatic potential.

The three riddles discussed in this section choose a mythical figure as their subject, whose life – or indeed death – is governed by circumstances which make it well-suited for the kind of disguise the riddle is looking for. The composers of such riddles rely on the reader's familiarity with a repertoire of mythical figures and stories and use this as a stock of common knowledge, which can serve as a referential framework for what they imply or allude to.

As in the case of paradox, allusions to myth and mythical events are not limited to riddles whose solution is a mythical figure or episode, but also occur very frequently among the other poems of the collection.<sup>19</sup>

## 5. Solutions

The riddles about mythical figures or scenes are the second largest group in the collection of the *Greek Anthology*. By far the largest group, however, are riddles whose solution consists in an everyday object such as wine, a mirror, a fish, smoke, or the objects we have seen in the examples mentioned.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the solutions of these sometimes very complicated and seemingly insolvable descriptions are often next to banal. The riddles' aim is not to seek an object of which nobody thinks and which is difficult or even nearly impossible to guess; on the contrary, the solutions are part of the everyday experience of an ordinary person. Even more than the mythical figures with whose stories an averagely educated Greek can be expected to be familiar, these mundane objects are based on commonly accessible knowledge, which is shared by everybody who belongs to the same cultural environment. The point of the riddle is not to provide a solution which is as far-fetched and difficult to find as possible but to disguise a well-known object in such a way that its nature is hard to discover.<sup>21</sup>

## 6. A Few Special Types

There is a small group of riddles in book 14 of the *Anthology* which function in a slightly different way from the examples discussed so far. Their identity is not codified by means of a riddling description of their nature but is based on linguistic criteria such as writing or spelling. One of them is similar to what we today would call a charade:

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19 Cf. e.g. the metonymic use of divine names discussed above.

20 It is perhaps not surprising that many of the objects can be associated with the symposium, which must have been one of the most common performance contexts for riddles (as suggested e.g. in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*); see Kwapisz in this volume.

21 This is, in fact, a common characteristic of Indo-European riddles; cf. West 2007: 364–365; 370. There are but very few riddles in the *Greek Anthology* which form an exception to this rule. One of them is *Anth. Pal.* 14.10, which refers to a series of cauldrons at the Oracle of Dodona and thus describes a concrete object, which is – though famous enough – not in the same way part of common knowledge as the objects described above.

νήσος ὅλη, μύκημα βοὸς φωνή τε δανειστοῦ.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.16)

An island is the whole, the lowing of the cow and the voice of the moneylender.

The riddle first describes the whole; then it gives a description of each of its two parts. The first is ῥο imitating the sound of the mooing cow; the second corresponds to δός, a word the moneylender would use. Put together they form the name of the island of Rhodes. The solution of the riddle is first to be divided into its two syllables and each of them needs to be guessed separately in order to find the whole.

A similar example is the following poem:

οἶνον τὴν ἐτέρην γράφε μητέρα καὶ θὲς ἐπ' ἄρθρῳ  
ἄρθρον, καὶ πάτρην πατρὸς ἄκοιτιν ὀρᾶς.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.31)<sup>22</sup>

Write down the second mother of wine and add to the limb

The article, and you see her father's bedfellow as his fatherland.

The riddle asks the reader to put Zeus' thigh, μηρός, in which he had enclosed baby Dionysus, together with the article ὁ, so that the result is the name Ὀμηρος. The riddle is based on the story of Semele and on the double meaning of ἄρθρον, "limb" (here "thigh") and "article"; both features we have already seen above. However, as in the previous riddle the point here is that we have to guess the two parts separately and to put them together to form one word in order to grasp the meaning of the riddle.

The following three examples make use of the fact that words can be transformed into different words by adding or reducing letters. The first one turns "nail", ὄνυξ, into "night", νύξ, by taking away the initial letter:

ἀνθρώπου μέλος εἰμί, ὃ καὶ τέμνει με σίδηρος·  
γράμματος αἰρομένου δύεται ἥελιος.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.35)

I am a limb of man, which iron cuts;

If you take away a letter, the sun goes down.

In the second poem of this type an additional letter changes the meaning of a word into almost its opposite:

γράμματος ἀρνωμένου πληγὴν ποδὸς οὔνομα τεύχει  
ἡμέτερον· παταίνει δὲ βροτῶν πόδας οὔποτ' ἑάσει.  
(*Anth. Pal.* 14.46)<sup>23</sup>

If you gain an additional letter, my name creates a blow for the foot;  
(Otherwise) it will ever prevent feet of humans from stumbling.

22 The second line refers to Smyrna, one of Homer's alleged places of origin, which is identified with Smyrna or Myrrha, who became her father's concubine and was later transformed into myrrh.

23 The word changes from σκάνδαλον into σάνδαλον.

The next poem is more sophisticated than the two previous ones as it consists of a whole series of words depending on how many letters one takes away. The riddle exists in two slightly differing versions, of which one goes as follows:

εἰμὶ χαμαίζηλον ζῶων μέλος· ἦν δ' ἀφέλης μου  
 γράμμα μόνον, κεφαλῆς γίνομαι ἄλλο μέρος·  
 ἦν δ' ἕτερον, ζῶον πάλιν ἔσσομαι· ἦν δὲ καὶ ἄλλο,  
 οὐ μόνον εὐρήσεις, ἀλλὰ διηκόσια.  
 (*Anth. Pal.* 14.105)<sup>24</sup>

I am a ground-seeking limb of animals; if you take away  
 One letter, I turn into a part of the head;  
 If you take away the next, I again become an animal; if again another,  
 You will find not only one but two hundred.

The word, which allows this kind of pun, is πούς; each time one takes away a letter from the beginning one gets a new word until the last letter stands for the figure 200. Apart from the play with letters, the poem makes use of other devices we have discussed earlier, e.g. the double meaning of letter and number. Thus the riddle shows some similarities to other types even though its point is different from the majority of the collection.

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I have tried to show that we can observe a series of recurring features in the riddles of book 14 of the *Greek Anthology*. Not all poems make use of all of them; but most use one or several and combine them into a multifaceted structure. Their use may differ from poem to poem as for instance in the different manifestations of metonymy discussed in the examples above, but we can still recognise the basic pattern of a particular feature. All together they contribute to the special character of the riddle poems.

These characteristics are means to disguise. They serve to create a sophisticated and puzzling if not straightaway contradicting message, which causes the recipient to reflect about its true meaning. It is the puzzling nature of the poems themselves which makes the reader alert and leads him to suspect that there is more to what he reads than what it seems to say. So the very form of the riddle poems, their obscure way of telling their tale, serves two aims at once: on the one hand, it hides their true subject from being recognised immediately, and on the other it draws the recipient's attention to the fact that there is something *hidden*, which he has to find

24 The following riddle, *Anth. Pal.* 14.106, has a different ending: rather than finishing with the last letter alone it takes this one away and instead ends with the first three letters, which represent an "expression of place", i.e. ποῦ.

out. In other words, it disguises and at the same time invites and challenges the reader to uncover the disguise.

The dense and highly sophisticated way the riddles describe their objects forms a certain contrast with the nature of these objects themselves. These are commonplace things or famous episodes or characters drawn from a common stock of knowledge such as everyday life or Greek myth and literature. No extraordinary knowledge of the world is required as far as the solution of the riddles is concerned. The point of the riddles is not to present an object as rare or *recherché* as possible but to disguise something mundane in a most sophisticated and hard-to-guess way. Hence it is not the *objects* of the riddles which require wide-ranging knowledge as well as the ability to see through allusions and to deal with their intricate and roundabout expressions; rather it is the *process of decoding* the riddles' disguise which demands all this and challenges the recipient's intellectual capacity.

However, here the recurrence of certain recognisable features can help. By using a limited set of devices the riddles themselves give the readers a clue how to tackle the task of solving them. Like the composers of the poems who are familiar with the tricks and techniques of their disguise, the recipients can learn how to solve the riddles by studying and memorising their particularities and thus gaining experience in recognising their devices. Both composers and recipients have at their disposal a repertoire of mental strategies or rules governing how a riddle works; the former try to use them in a sophisticated and original way to make the riddles as confusing and their solutions as difficult as possible to find, whereas the latter apply these techniques in order to decode the ambiguities and puzzles they are confronted with. It appears that there exists a kind of code system with which both composer and recipient are familiar; in other words, we may say that there is a language of riddles: it consists of certain ways of thinking and functions according to certain rules which can be described and classified. This language gives the riddles their specific shape and makes them appear in the forms we find them in the collection of the *Greek Anthology*.

Such observations and reflections are not entirely modern. We find in antiquity several attempts to classify and describe the nature of riddles and related phenomena. As early as the fourth century BC Clearchus of Soloi defines in his work *Περὶ γρίφων* the nature of γρίφος as a "problem posed to entertain (or: of playful/competitive character) and to be solved by means of intellectual inquiry"<sup>25</sup> and distinguishes no less than seven types

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25 Clearch. fr. 86 Wehrli ap. Ath. 10.448c: γρίφος πρόβλημα ἐστὶ παιστικὸν προστακτικὸν τοῦ διὰ ζητήσεως εὐρεῖν τῇ διανοίᾳ τὸ προβληθέν κτλ. For a discussion see Luz 2010: 140–141.

of γρίφοι, one of which seems to correspond fairly closely to the type of riddles we have in the collection of the *Anthology*.<sup>26</sup> Aristotle compares the αἴνιγμα<sup>27</sup> to metaphor and seems to refer to a similar phenomenon to what we described as metonymy above.<sup>28</sup> However, the most interesting passage in this context is a scholion on Lucian's *Vitarum auctio*, which describes the difference between γρίφος and αἴνιγμα as follows:

διαφέρει γρίφος καὶ αἴνιγμα, ὅτι τὸ μὲν αἴνιγμα ὁμολογεῖ τις ἀγνοεῖν, τὸν δὲ γρίφον ἀγνοεῖ δοκῶν ἐπίστασθαι. οἷον αἴνιγμα μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ “τί δίπουν; τί τρίπουν; τί τετράπουν”; ἐνταῦθα δῆλον τὸ ἐρώτημα. γρίφος δὲ οἷον “Ἑκτορα τὸν Πριάμου Διομήδης ἔκτανεν ἀνὴρ”. ἐνταῦθα δοκεῖ μὲν εἰδέναι τὸ ῥηθὲν, ἀγνοεῖ δὲ, ὅτι Διομήδης ἦν ἀνὴρ Ἀχιλλεύς· ἐκείνην γὰρ ἔσχε μετὰ τὴν Βρισηίδα.

(schol. Lucian, *Vit. auct.* 14)<sup>29</sup>

The difference between *griphos* and *ainigma* is that in the *ainigma* one is aware of being ignorant whereas in the *griphos* one is ignorant but thinks one understands. So, for example, an *ainigma* is: “What has two legs? What has three legs? What has four legs?” Hence the question is clear. A *griphos* is: “Hector, the son of Priam, was killed by the man Diomedes”. Here one thinks to know what is said, however, one does not realise that “the man Diomedes” (i.e. Diomedes’ man/husband) is Achilles. For he got her (Diomedes) after Briseis.

The scholiast distinguishes between two Greek terms, both of which can refer to what we would call a riddle. The two types differ in their form: whereas the first, the αἴνιγμα, asks a question which is clearly marked as such, the other, the γρίφος, consists in a claim or statement which seems to make sense at first sight, unless, of course, the recipient realises that there is something wrong with this claim and that there must be a different meaning behind it. The γρίφος, according to the scholiast, does not explicitly tell the recipient that it contains a hidden meaning which has to be found; it rather misleads him unless he is capable of discovering its point. The scholiast’s distinction of the two types of riddles, therefore, is based on their formal appearance: one presents itself as a question, the other as a statement, which – as the reader is compelled to find out for himself – contradicts common knowledge.

According to the definition of the scholiast of Lucian, the riddles of book 14 of the *Anthology* would belong to the γρίφος type rather than the

26 For an attempt to reconstruct the seven types (of whom our source of the text, Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*, names only three) see Luz 2010: 141–146; Wehrli 1969: 76. They include the naming of words beginning with a particular letter or containing a certain syllable, the resuming of a literary quotation, etc.

27 For the distinction of γρίφος and αἴνιγμα see below.

28 Arist. *Rh.* 3.1405a37–b6; 2.1394b33–1395a2; *Poet.* 1458a25–30.

29 The riddle makes use of the double meaning of the word Διομήδης as the genitive of the female and the nominative of the male name.

ἀνίγμᾱ, as they – like the Diomedes example mentioned in the scholion<sup>30</sup> – present puzzling statements which need to be decoded before it is possible to grasp their true meaning. However, we cannot expect consistency in the use of terminology or concept in antiquity: γρίφος and ἀνίγμᾱ are sometimes used interchangeably<sup>31</sup> and, as we have seen, Clearchus uses the term γρίφος for a much broader range of intellectual entertainment than just riddles. What is more important for the present discussion is that already in antiquity we find an awareness of the specific formal structure which riddles can have, and attempts to explain or rather classify them according to their formal appearance.

Can we now, in conclusion, answer the initial question of what makes a riddle a riddle? Looking at the material discussed above I would propose the following description: A riddle of the kind we find in the *Greek Anthology* is a description of an object or a situation which disguises this object by certain means or devices with the aim to puzzle the recipient. The means of disguise that the riddles apply follow a set of recognisable patterns (e.g. most notable is the use of figurative expressions and a tendency to contrary-to-common-sense statements); we find characteristic ways of thinking and speaking which are specific to riddles. These characteristic features give them the particular shape which marks or identifies them as riddles and distinguishes them from other kinds of questions.

## Epilogue

If it be permitted to apply conclusions from such a different type of text as the poems of the *Greek Anthology* to the episode of Bilbo and Gollum we started with – can we now tell why Bilbo and Gollum, both apparently experienced in the art of riddle making, agree that Bilbo's last question is an unfair one? Without intending to engage in a discussion of modern riddles, and in particular in those of Tolkien's tale – I think we can. The riddles of the competition show some of the characteristics we have found in the *Greek Anthology*, e.g. the common knowledge solutions, the paradox, the fact that they do not contain a direct question, etc.<sup>32</sup> Bilbo's last "riddle" is of a very different kind: it does not use any of the devices the others do, and its solution is transient, a personal circumstance of this particular

30 Indeed, the Diomedes riddle occurs in the *Anthology*, *Anth. Pal.* 14.18.

31 See Luz 2010: 144 n. 26. In particular the Eunuch riddle referred to in Plato *Resp.* 5.479b–c is called an ἀνίγμᾱ, though it shows exactly the form our scholiast claims for the γρίφος.

32 For an example see n. 18 above.



moment and known only to Bilbo himself; it could, in fact, be anything that he has in his – to speak with Gollum – pocketses.

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## *Technopaegnia* in Heraclitus and the Delphic Oracles: Shared Compositional Techniques

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Since antiquity Heraclitus' enigmatic style has attracted attention. Aristotle refers to him as dark or obscure (*skoteinos*), and characterizes one of his sentences as unclear (*adelos*). Timon of Phlius called him riddler (*ainiktes*).<sup>1</sup> In light of Heraclitus' comment on Apollo's oracles, "The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither declares nor conceals, but gives a sign",<sup>2</sup> modern critics have been a bit more specific when it comes to characterizing Heraclitus' style; "because Heraclitus himself uses language in precisely this way [i.e. as he describes the oracle in fragment 93], we may infer that he was deliberately adopting a Delphic mode of discourse".<sup>3</sup> In one succinct formulation, "one can scarcely miss the Delphic elements in Heraclitus' own style".<sup>4</sup> This may be one of the few commonplaces about Heraclitus where there is a unanimity of opinion. Heraclitus speaks in an oracular mode and more specifically a Delphic one.

I propose to examine this scholarly commonplace. My first question is what "elements" make Heraclitus' sayings enigmatic. My second concerns whether these elements might properly be considered "Delphic", and, if so, whether they generate Delphic ambiguity. My third is whether Heraclitus borrowed more than style from Delphi, or framed differently whether there

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1 [Arist.] *Mund.* 396b20, and Arist. *Rh.* 3.1407b13; Timon, *SH* 817 (ap. Diog. Laert. 9.6). Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 2.5.15.

2 D 93. This and all following translations of Heraclitus are from Kahn 1979 for which I provide Diels-Kranz' numbers.

3 Nightingale 2007: 183. Fränkel (1974: 218) writes, "like the Delphian God who 'does not tell nor hide, but indicates' (D 93), Heraclitus asks his readers to find the transcendental by the indirect means of extrapolation, through the device of the double proportion". Cook (1975: 444) writes, "For the general character of this statement, unless it is taken for a simple transmission of a commonplace about oracles, has to have general force".

4 Kahn 1979: 123.

is a similar relationship between style and content in the philosopher and the Pythia's words. These three issues – the shared stylistic elements, or *technopaegnia*, of both Heraclitus and Delphic oracles, the relationship between these elements and ambiguity, and the connection between these elements and meaning – all contribute to a clarification of both Heraclitus and Delphi's enigmatic reputations, and throw light on the oral origins of later uses of *technopaegnia* often linked with and dependent on writing.

Charles H. Kahn, perhaps more than any other editor of Heraclitus, is keenly attuned to the “artistic design” of Heraclitus’ words “made *a priori* probable by the clear evidence of literary artistry in every fragment where the original wording has been preserved intact”.<sup>5</sup> Some of this artistry is dependent on Heraclitus’ use of “puns”, “riddles”, and “wordplay”. Yet, many of Heraclitus’ statements “can properly be understood only as riddles”. His procedure of giving riddling signs “is conceived of less as a literary device than as an inevitable consequence of human ignorance and the recondite nature of the truth: like the utterance of Apollo, what Heraclitus has to say is necessarily enigmatic, because human beings do not have the ‘insights’ which divine wisdom can take for granted”.<sup>6</sup> In Kahn’s assessment, Heraclitus’ literary devices are superbly fitted to conveying the recondite nature of truth, which owes itself to the workings of the universe, human ignorance and even to language’s capacity to reveal and hide. Even so, the literary and artistic aspects of Heraclitus’ words are secondary to the truths Heraclitus is keen to explain. In a similar vein, Uvo Hölscher writes “the similes of Heraclitus are, therefore, no mere literary device; rather, what can be seen is for him a simile for what is hidden. ... In Heraclitus simile takes the place of proof”.<sup>7</sup> Hölscher considers how metaphors, similes, homonyms, riddles, oracles, aphorisms and proverbs account for the poetical and enigmatic quality of Heraclitus’ words, yet are more importantly vehicles for revealing philosophical truths.<sup>8</sup> Hermann Fränkel describes a “thought pattern of the geometrical mean” prevalent in Heraclitus that is akin to the analogical reasoning that informs metaphor.<sup>9</sup> Fränkel too makes clear that this thought pattern conveys Heraclitus’ philosophical

5 Kahn 1964: 190.

6 Kahn 1964: 193.

7 Hölscher 1974: 232–233.

8 Riddling paradoxes, a term that allows Hölscher to acknowledge similarities between Heraclitus’ sayings and riddles despite their differences – riddles explicitly pose questions, Heraclitus does not – include D 22, 125, 26, 60, 16, 34, 49a, 56. In Hölscher’s scheme, similes appear in D 61, 51, 90, 49a, 58 and 60. Hölscher also notes that some of these sayings include metaphors.

9 Fränkel finds the proportional ratio, defined as  $a:b::b:c$ , in D 79, 34, 107, 117, 123, 52, 2, 44, 9, 4, 29, 53, 99, 3, 45, 94, 61, 31, 36 and in D 1 and 118 when combined.

intentions.<sup>10</sup> Albert Cook writes that Heraclitus is “incidentally poetic”, and thereby summarizes the general sentiment of scholars who study Heraclitus’ style.<sup>11</sup> Style or form in Heraclitus serves philosophical content.

In these assessments of Heraclitus’ enigmatic style, the differences between metaphor and the genres associated with Heraclitus, i.e. riddles, proverbs, oracles and aphorisms, are not always noted, and it is not difficult to understand why. Proverbs to which aphorisms and gnomes are closely related, as well as riddles and similes are all composed from metaphors, as Aristotle analyzes in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. Metaphor, in Aristotle, includes replacing genus for species, as in the use of the general term “lie” for “lying at anchor”; species for genus, as in using the specific number “ten thousand” for many; species for species, as in using “draw away” for “cleave”, both of which are specific types of “taking”, and analogy which entails using two terms from a proportion of four terms such as a:b::c:d (*Poet.* 1457b9–16 and *Rh.* 3.1411a). Aristotle’s definition of metaphor is capacious and thus includes analogies, synecdoche and metonymy. Riddles employ metaphors in order “to express true facts under impossible combinations” (*Poet.* 1458a26–27); similes are a type of metaphor (*Rh.* 3.1406b), while proverbs are nearly identical to gnomes (*Rh.* 2.1394b) and are comprised of “species for species” metaphors (*Rh.* 3.1413a).

Scholars who study Heraclitus’ style, like Aristotle in his discussion of metaphor, do not draw firm distinctions among these interrelated terms. For the purposes of this study, it makes sense not to press for precision amongst the studies of Heraclitus’ style, but to collate their descriptions as follows. The prevalent trope in Heraclitus has been and is best described as metaphor, including simile, metonymy, synecdoche and analogy. In so far as nearly every one of Heraclitus’ statements “provides its own self-sufficient context while talking about another context”,<sup>12</sup> nearly every statement about particular objects such as Delphi’s language, barley drinks, asses and carting wheels is a species-for-genus metaphor for hidden cosmic processes, even if there is debate about how and why this comparison ought or can be drawn. Because Heraclitus’ sayings appear in later collections of proverbs, these sayings are often considered proverbial in some way.<sup>13</sup> Yet, proverbs have two key “characteristics: precise coinage and

10 Fränkel (1974: 220 n. 16) writes about the proportion he discerns: “...there is much in the style of Heraclitus to remind the reader of the *figurae orationis* as they were taught by later rhetoricians, but in the writing of Heraclitus the subject determines the expression and not the reverse”.

11 Cook 1975: 449.

12 Cook 1975: 445.

13 D 34 is clearly proverbial, on which see Robb 1983: 185–186.

general recognition",<sup>14</sup> and as such have less in common with Heraclitus' sayings, which often defy immediate understanding and recognition.<sup>15</sup> His sayings imply questions and conundrums rather than offer "experiential solutions", and unlike a proverb that "summarizes common experience" and hence is backward-leaning, Heraclitus' sayings look at the present.<sup>16</sup> Riddles, on the other hand, like Heraclitus' sayings, pose questions and present everyday objects and ideas in ways that defy general recognition. Like oracles, riddles are forward-looking in so far as they require answers or further thought in order to have any meaning.<sup>17</sup> Of all the genres with which Heraclitus has affinities, riddles offer the best comparandum. Heraclitus' sayings are also deemed aphorisms or gnomes, both cousins of proverbs, because his sayings are marked by balanced phrases and terseness. The balance or parallelism between phrases that contain contradictions tends to heighten Heraclitus' paradoxes and thereby accentuates the puzzling nature of his words. This trait is best understood as a consequence of the oral culture Heraclitus inherited and operated within. Heraclitus has converted balancing cola from the hexameter that he eschews into "binary schemes" and "parallelism" appropriate to prose.<sup>18</sup> In short, then, Heraclitus' enigmatic style is best and most often compared to riddles, and largely depends on metaphors and balanced cola, whose use grows out of the cultural moment in which Heraclitus lived, a moment when Greece was gradually moving from oral verse to written prose.<sup>19</sup>

The balanced cola or parallelism that is so pervasive in Heraclitus' sayings is explained in Kevin Robb's study of oral performance and Heraclitus' social context.<sup>20</sup> His work complements and contextualizes the studies

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14 Carlston 1980: 88.

15 On proverbs, see Russo 1983, Huxley 1981, Kindstrand 1978, Martin 2009.

16 Cook 1975: 443.

17 See Pepicello and Green 1984; Hasan-Rokem and Shulman 1996.

18 Cook 1975: 442.

19 Cook (1975), Kahn (1979), Most (1999), Poster (2006), and Robb (1983) provide a comprehensive examination of this moment and its consequences for the poetics of early Greek philosophers such as Heraclitus.

20 Charting a midway course between those scholars who argue Heraclitus composed a book in continuous prose and those who argue that Heraclitus' book was a collection of sayings that could be orally performed, Most (1999: 357) charts a *tertium quid*. Heraclitus' book, in his view, had an "external organization [that] may have been simply a collection of aphorisms ... [with] individual memorable formulations, applicable to a variety of situations, grouped perhaps by subject matter, but each effective more on its own terms than because of its place in a chain of arguments". These "individual memorable formulations" imply a performative context for Heraclitus and this performative context then shapes these sayings as much as their philosophical content. Thus a pragmatic approach to Heraclitus that takes

that favor a formalist approach to Heraclitus' style.<sup>21</sup> Robb locates salient elements that contribute to the enigmatic quality of Heraclitus' words, among which parallelism plays a large part. Robb compares Heraclitus' sayings to Hebrew proverbs and Egyptian wisdom literature,<sup>22</sup> which in Miriam Lichthien's analysis have an "orational style", "a form of poetized speech, although an unusually uniform one, because it is rhythmized by exploiting the echo principle".<sup>23</sup> Such poetized speech is prose, not poetry, and is marked by sound play that serves to make it memorable so that it can be easily remembered in a society where oral modes of transmission are still viable ways of preserving information.<sup>24</sup> This orational style includes alliteration, internal "sound links", assonance, consonance, parallelism, chiasmus, word plays, onomatopoeia.<sup>25</sup> These aural devices first and foremost serve mnemonic needs, and are then perceived as poetic because they arrest the listener's attention.<sup>26</sup> These elements appear fre-

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such performances into account is not simply possible, but perhaps necessary to understand Heraclitus' syntax and stylistic choices.

- 21 To look at the context of Heraclitus' performances that is implied in this sort of analysis is to shift from a formal analysis of Heraclitus to a pragmatic or performance analysis. See Martin 2009 on proverbs. Martin lays out the variety of approaches to proverbs, ancient and modern, and considers the differences between pragmatic analyses that consider proverbs and riddles as culturally shaped performances and formal analyses such as Aristotle offers. Martin suggests that while Aristotle is a formalist who rarely conveys by whom, where and when proverbs were performed, Aristotle does suggest that proverbs are appropriate for old men, not children, uses vocabulary that suggests proverbs were performed, and comments on proverbs in tragedy where social performance may be discerned.
- 22 Briefly and eloquently surveyed in Robb 1983: 153–174.
- 23 Robb (1983: 175) writes, "Whether or not the collection [Egyptian Instructions] was ever read privately, in part or as a whole, is strictly speaking not relevant, for the style of the core of the genre, the sayings or proverbs, remains that of something designed to be recited, and, it should be stressed, memorized".
- 24 Robb 1983: 178.
- 25 Robb (1983) documents the occurrence of these devices in the first fifteen sayings of Diels' collection.
- 26 This sequence of cause and effect matches Slings' analysis of Herodotus' organization of information in his orally orientated sentences. Slings (2002: 63) writes, "A figure of speech is a fixed strategy used for arranging information, borrowed from everyday language but employed in such a way that the competent native reader/listener will recognize it as untypical of everyday language and interpret it as literary". Similarly, Robb (1983: 161) following Havelock argues that these containers helped preserve in memory Heraclitus' sayings: "poetry was called into existence in preliterate ages to subserve the needs of oral memory, what Havelock calls cultural storage; the self-contained saying is an important but neglected instrument or device of oral memory, which in turn is compounded of parts which are ancient mnemonic devices".

quently in Heraclitus and are not merely functional, or simply operative at the level of sound. In Roman Jakobson's formulation, when sound echoes make words congruent, these words are necessarily "evaluated in respect to similarity and/or dissimilarity in meaning".<sup>27</sup> Aural conventions, including repetition in metric patterning and in grammatical structures, then, are not merely ornamental. Making two words or phrases equivalent or parallel through sound, acoustic conventions interfere with any straightforward referential meaning a word or phrase might have and make it "symbolic, multiplex, polysemantic" and therefore also often ambiguous. A few examples will indicate how these devices work together to make Heraclitus' sayings enigmatic.

Heraclitus records one famous riddle that captures how riddles are "paradoxical descriptions [that] seem incapable of being satisfied, because they embody self-contradiction" and thus provoke reflection because they pose "a seeming head-on conceptual collision".<sup>28</sup> When Homer approaches some boys fishing, they tell him, presumably in response to his question about what they are doing or fishing for, "What we see and catch we leave behind; what we neither see nor catch we carry away".<sup>29</sup> The answer to this seeming impossibility is "lice". This riddle occurs in one of the longest fragments of Heraclitus and may convey, as Heraclitus' statement about the Pythia at Delphi does, a programmatic aspect of Heraclitus' work.<sup>30</sup> Knowledge comes from the struggle to understand a contradiction that is "difficult at first and obvious later" and from our capacity to see and grasp what may or may not be present.<sup>31</sup> The riddle reads as follows,

ὅσα εἶδομεν καὶ ἐλάβομεν, τὰυτα ἀπολείπομεν,  
ὅσα δὲ οὔτε εἶδομεν οὔτ' ἐλάβομεν, τὰυτα φέρομεν.<sup>32</sup>

The riddle achieves its effect through various sound echoes that heighten its paradox. Two balanced clauses of eighteen syllables include the repetition of two verbs (εἶδομεν and ἐλάβομεν), two relative pronouns (ὅσα), and two demonstratives (τὰυτα), as well as six words ending in -ομεν. The jingle of these aural repetitions conveys the provocative teasing of young boys confronting an old man, and emphasizes the riddle's apparent contra-

27 Jakobson 1987: 87.

28 Gallop 1989: 125.

29 D 56.

30 Hölscher (1974: 231) writes, "The point, conveyed merely by the riddle form, is: Things, too, present a paradoxical, secret reality, which at the same time, is manifest. Things themselves are a riddle to be solved".

31 Kahn 1979: 112.

32 Here and throughout, I break Heraclitus' prose (and prose Delphic oracles) into cola in order to make the stylistic features I discuss more obvious.

diction that bars immediate comprehension or solution. The listener must distinguish between two contradictory claims made in the same language and then reconcile them in order to come up with an answer.

Other sayings of Heraclitus lack the riddling frame that is provided in the tale about Homer yet have an aural style and a paradoxical pattern that is typical of riddling, such as “The sea is the purest and foulest water: for fish drinkable and life sustaining; for men undrinkable and deadly”.<sup>33</sup> Hölscher writes “It is difficult to decide whether sea-water is simile or phenomenon for him; the phenomenon *is* simile”.<sup>34</sup> The paradoxical phrasing of Heraclitus’ saying compels us to agree with Hölscher and consider that the sea is something more than salt water and is a simile or a metaphor for some hidden structure of the world.

θάλασσα ὕδωρ καθαρώτατον καὶ μιαιρότατον,  
 ἰχθύσι μὲν πότιμον καὶ σωτήριον,  
 ἀνθρώποις δὲ ἄποτον καὶ ὀλέθριον.

“The purest and foulest water” is a thirteen-syllable phrase whose superlatives contain the same number of syllables and identical endings. This phrase is followed by two twelve-syllable phrases with parallel syntax and homoeoteleuton. The repeated ending -ov makes all six adjectives that describe this water near aural equivalents, thus highlighting the contradictory aspects of the water Heraclitus describes. The “answer” to this rhythmic three-clause saying is the first word in Heraclitus’ saying, “the sea”. It is not difficult to see how this statement, like many of Heraclitus’ statements, can become a riddle. What is drinkable and undrinkable, life giving and life taking, polluted and pure? The sea. What is always changing and always the same? A river. What is both straight and crooked at the same time? The corkscrew. Who gives birth to slaves and free men at the same time? War. When is chaff gold? When you are a mule.<sup>35</sup> “Who is absent while present? Answer: a deaf person”.<sup>36</sup> When is one man many? When he is brave. What goes up and down and is one and the same? A road. In Gallop’s analysis, these sayings do not explicitly pose a question as a riddle does. Yet in so far as their arrangement of words and sounds, or deployment of tropes and paradoxes confounds meaning, their similarities to riddles can be observed.<sup>37</sup> Cook writes that Heraclitus’ sayings “are whole

33 D 61, on which see Kahn 1979: 185–189.

34 Hölscher 1974: 233.

35 D 61 (sea), 9 (asses), 59 (carting wheel), 53 (war), 77 (death and delight), 12 and 91 (river).

36 Robb 1983: 185–186.

37 Gallop (1989: 128) lists D 125, 49, 59, 60, 103, 61, 12, 49a, 51, 48. Hussey (1999: 94) writes about D 60, 103, 59, 125 (on Gallop’s list) and 11, 58, 9, 56 (not on Gal-



entities, but riddlingly, they are at the same time not whole entities: they advertise the fact that there is a process by which they require completion".<sup>38</sup>

In the famous and brief "the bow: its name is life, its work is death",<sup>39</sup> Heraclitus deploys a homonym in order to address a "concern with the truth and falsity of names, with 'etymology' understood as a search for the deeper significance hidden in words and naming".<sup>40</sup> This saying too exploits parallelism, ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος. Recited without the particle δέ, the halves have an equal number of syllables and the repetition of -ος at the end of two words creates a catchy phrase whose rhythm reinforces the paradox of Heraclitus' words. And while Heraclitus uses the bow to interrogate the hidden structure of the world through the hidden recesses of words, we can rewrite Heraclitus' saying as a riddling question with little effort, namely "when is life death? When it is a bow". Thus we can see how the bow is a metaphor for how nature loves to hide and contains two opposing meanings in itself. Despite the notoriety of the bow fragment, homonyms do not play a large role in Heraclitus' sayings, though they are common in riddles. In the riddle, "When is a bird sad? When it is a blue bird", blue is a homonym – one of two words with the same spelling and different meanings.

While this use of a homonym is nearly unique in Heraclitus, homonyms occur frequently in Delphic oracles, where the more common sources of Heraclitus' enigmatic quality, metaphor, riddling paradox and sound echoes, also appear. In order to explore whether these elements generate Delphic ambiguity, I will concentrate here only on the oracles attributed to Delphi in Herodotus' *Histories*, despite scholarly debate about whether Herodotus' oracles bear any relationship to oracles issued at the divinatory ritual at Delphi. In one view, Herodotus, or perhaps Delphic officials and/or Herodotus' informants, but not the divinatory ritual at Delphi, is the source of Delphic oracles in his *Histories*.<sup>41</sup> Delphi's reputation for ambi-

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lop's list), "All of these remarks might be the material for riddles ... they are examples of something amusing, disconcerting and even confusing".

38 Gallop 1989; Cook 1975: 446.

39 D 48. Translation mine.

40 Kahn 1979: 201; Poster 2006: 3.

41 Crahay 1956; Fontenrose 1978; Bowden 2005; Kindt 2006 and Beerden and Naerebout in this volume. The reasons for seeing no connection between the ritual at Delphi and the ambiguous versified and/or playful oracles vary. Bowden argues that the epigraphical oracles from the middle of the fifth century wherein Delphi approved or advised against a course of action proposed by a client is typical of the oracles issued centuries early. Thus almost all depictions of oracles that vary from epigraphical evidence, which often contains the formulaic "it is better for you to...", are dramatic representations that serve the narrative and ideological purposes

guity and its manner of speech are, in this view, a successful, influential mirage created by crafty priests and/or imaginative story-tellers. I find this view unpersuasive and have argued elsewhere that Delphic oracles of a variety of types issued from the Pythia during a divinatory ritual.<sup>42</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the relationship between Herodotus' oracles and the divinatory ritual may be temporarily placed aside. What we can say, at least initially, is that Herodotus is one of the earliest recorders of Delphic oracles, and thus his oracles comprise the earliest chronological layer of the Delphic tradition, however one understands their relationship to divination at Delphi. Herodotean oracles then convey the Delphic tradition as Heraclitus might have known it and thus provide the best evidence for assessing the well-noted stylistic affinities between the Delphic tradition and Heraclitus' words.

Delphic ambiguity is frequently noted or mentioned in scholarship on Delphi. And yet, because of the diversity of oracles within the tradition,<sup>43</sup> there are remarkably few analyses of the formal devices or of the communicative context of oracle performances that might explain oracular ambiguity.<sup>44</sup> Joseph Fontenrose uses the word "ambiguous" to describe certain "modes" of oracular advice and provides the most comprehensive accounting of oracular ambiguity.<sup>45</sup> Fontenrose tends to associate oracles he considers ambiguous with folklore, a category he derives from later literature as much as Greek literature. This category, he notes, includes proverbs and

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es of those who record them. In Kindt's view, Herodotus' oracles must be understood as a consequence of Herodotus' historiographical aims rather than in relation to the divinatory ritual. Beerden and Naerebout use comparative evidence about divination to suggest that riddles and ambiguity are untypical of divination. Hence ambiguous and riddling oracles may be attributed to Delphi, but are not part of the divinatory ritual.

42 Maurizio 1995 and 1997. In their collection of oracles, Parke and Wormell (PW) consider that ambiguous oracles and verse oracles were issued during the divinatory ritual. Others who do not draw a clear line of demarcation between Herodotean oracles and the divinatory ritual at Delphi and who accept that Delphic oracles were ambiguous include Parker 1985, Price 1985, and Morgan 1990, all listed in Bowden 2005: 51 n. 15, to which can be added Malkin 1987, Vernant 1991, Flower 2008.

43 One sixth of the corpus is in hexameter verse, collected in Andersen 1987, while most are in prose. Oracles are sometimes quoted directly and are quite long, and at others times they are recorded in indirect discourse and are remarkably brief. They are found in a chronologically wide range of sources dating from the fifth century BC to fourth century AD, which include tragedies, comedies, histories, epigraphical sources and collections such that of Oenomaus.

44 Maurizio (1997) offers analysis of one sort of ambiguity generated in performance.

45 Fontenrose 1978: 15, 20 and chart on p. 21.

riddles which in turn deploy metaphors and homonyms.<sup>46</sup> In his survey of divination, Giovanni Manetti explains divination in terms of native logic and reasoning.<sup>47</sup> While Manetti's focus is not exclusively on Delphi, his list of the causes of ambiguity, like Fontenrose's, includes homonyms, metaphors, riddles, and a "switch in perspective". These studies of Delphic oracles and divination find that their ambiguity is caused by elements similar to those revealed in analyses of Heraclitus' style. Delphic oracles, like Heraclitus' sayings, deploy tropes most notably metaphors, which often occur in the genres with which oracles overlap, namely proverbs and riddles, and they also deploy homonyms. While some Delphic oracles deploy hexameter verse, less frequently iambic, there are to date no studies of acoustic devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, homoeoteleuton, and word repetition in Delphic oracles.<sup>48</sup> From my survey of the Delphic oracles recorded by Herodotus, whether in verse or prose, metaphors and acoustic devices occur with considerable frequency.<sup>49</sup> Thus at first glance it seems that the sources of Heraclitus' ambiguity might rightfully be called "Delphic elements" since these elements appear in many Delphic oracles. A few examples will demonstrate the occurrence of these devices, their relationship to oracular ambiguity, and their similarity and differences to the devices in Heraclitus' sayings.

While hexameter verse provides oracles with a sonic framework, so too does the occurrence of sound echoes of the sort evident in Heraclitus' sayings. These sound echoes occur in verse oracles as well as prose oracles, even in those reported in indirect discourse. When Glaucus asks if he might renege on a promise, the Pythia tells him that the Oath-god's son will seek revenge on his descendents.<sup>50</sup> Fearing this punishment, Glaucus asks if he might be forgiven for his impious question and the Pythia says, "to ask the god is equivalent to doing the deed". Were the oracle recorded in direct speech δύνασθαι, an infinitive, would most likely have been δύνатаι. Thus each of three phrases of five syllables ends in a similar

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46 Fontenrose 1978: Chapter 2, "Oracles of Folkloric Origin".

47 Manetti 1993.

48 Delgado (1986) studies Hesiod in relation to oracles and offers a model of the sort of close analysis of oracles that does not appear elsewhere.

49 In my preliminary survey of 58 oracles attributed to Delphi in Herodotus as collected by Parke and Wormell, 31 different oracles exhibit one or more of the following devices: 19 contain metaphors (PW 31, 33, 39, 53, 54, 60, 65, 67, 70, 72, 81, 84, 92, 94, 95, 100, 101, 107, 108), 4 contain homonyms (PW 6, 7, 49, 86), 7 have parallel clauses (PW 35, 36, 52, 63, 82, 92, 94), 3 have chiasmus (PW 52, 67, 116), 7 have repetition of words including anaphora (PW 8, 10, 31, 35, 49, 52, 82), 7 have assonance or consonance (PW 6, 33, 41, 83, 91, 92, 93).

50 PW 36. Other examples of prose oracles with sound echoes include PW 83 and 93.

sound (-αι) and makes equivalent units that underscore the meaning of the Pythia's words.

τὸ πειρηθῆναι τοῦ θεοῦ  
καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι  
ἴσον δύνασθαι.

The Pythia addresses the Cretans in direct discourse and in prose. Her response contains not only hints of rhythmic patterns because of its traces of iambic verse, as Parke and Wormell suggest, but also consonance. She says ὦ νήπιοι, ἐπιμέμφεσθε ὅσα ὕμιν ἐκ τῶν Μενέλεω τιμωρημάτων Μίνως ἔπεμψε μηνίων δακρύματα...<sup>51</sup> The repetition of the sounds in the names Menelaus, Minos and the Greek word for anger (*menion*) draws a parallel between these leaders as well as hints that the name Minos may be etymologically connected to anger.

While more examples of alliteration and sound echoes can be found in prose utterances, these in general do not contribute to or cause the Pythia's words to be ambiguous, as in the Cretan oracle. In one instance in a hexameter oracle, the rhythmic repetition of the word "children" seems to generate some ambiguity because Herodotus labels the oracle in which this repetition appears ἀμφιδέξιον ("ambiguous"). When Cypselus enters Apollo's temple, he receives the oracle, "Blessed is this man who enters my house | Cypselus the son of Eetion, king of famous Corinth | he and his children, but not the children of his children (are blessed). The last line, αὐτὸς καὶ παῖδες, παίδων γε μὲν οὐκέτι παῖδες, contains a form of the word "children" three times. Like the Sphinx's riddle that conflates three stages of a man's life, this last line conflates three generations of Cypselus' descendants and thus appears to confuse its recipient. Yet, without Herodotus' label ἀμφιδέξιον we might not consider this oracle ambiguous because it is rather easy to supply "are blessed" from line one and make sense of line three.<sup>52</sup> This raises an interesting puzzle about how and when to define an oracle as ambiguous.<sup>53</sup>

51 PW 93.

52 PW 8.

53 How and Wells (1989 *ad loc.*) in their commentary on ἀμφιδέξιον write, "Since the oracle is in no sense ambiguous this is best taken as two-handed, that is, two-edged, in the sense that while promising success to Cypselus and his sons, the oracle also prophesies the deposition of his grandsons". Since the oracle's meaning seems very clear to us, one may be inclined to accept How and Wells' interpretation of ἀμφιδέξιον. Yet, their interpretation ignores that the Bacchiadae also failed to understand and considered ἄσημον another oracle they received, despite the fact it had the same meaning as another oracle they knew, or so Herodotus tells us (5.92b). In sum, Herodotus paints the Bacchiadae as inept oracle-interpreters. Moreover, Lucian (*Iupp. trag.* 43) uses ἀμφιδέξιον to describe the oracle that

Many metaphors in Delphic oracles are of the species-for-species type. Croesus is told he will rule until a mule sits on the throne of Persia. A mule, it turns out, is a species of hybrids, as is Cyrus who is of mixed race and who sits on Persia's throne and defeats Croesus.<sup>54</sup> King Arcesilaus of Cyrene is told that, should he find an oven full of jars, he should not bake it.<sup>55</sup> Upon finding his enemies in a tower, he sets it on fire, an act which leads to his demise. When the Argives ask Delphi how they might fare best when they hear the Persians are about to invade, the Pythia gives them three lines of hexameter verse filled with consonance and alliteration. She tells them that they are despised by their neighbors, though loved by the gods, and that they ought to sit holding a spear and protecting their head, for their head will guard the body.<sup>56</sup> The oracle seems to advise the Argives not to join the Greeks against the Persians, advice which the Argives ignore. The oracle uses a species-for-species metaphor of a person sitting on guard for the city, whose head may refer to the city's ruling elite, and whose body may refer to the population. The wooden wall oracle too may be considered a species-for-species metaphor.<sup>57</sup> These sorts of metaphors display great variation and several remain undeciphered.<sup>58</sup>

The most famous ambiguous oracle is one that Croesus receives, "If crossing the Halys river you go to war, you will destroy a great kingdom".<sup>59</sup> "Great kingdom" is a genus-for-species metaphor and as such its possible application is not specific.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the Pythia says to Tisamenus who makes inquiry at Delphi concerning children that he will win five great contests.<sup>61</sup> Tisamenus believes that these are athletic contests. Yet the Spartans, when learning of this oracle, interpret the great contests to be military and have Tisamenus accompany them on their military campaigns. The Spartan exegetical efforts inform the reader as much

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Croesus received about destroying a great kingdom because it admits of two meanings and hence is ambiguous. To us the double-meaning of this oracle is clear, though to Croesus it had only one meaning. For these reasons, ἀμφιδέξιον is best understood as two-edged, or with two meanings and hence ambiguous. See below on PW 72.

54 PW 54.

55 PW 70.

56 PW 92.

57 PW 95.

58 PW 65.

59 PW 53.

60 Aristotle mentions this oracle in his discussion of ambiguity which follows his discussion of metaphor (*Rh.* 3.1407a-b). It is perhaps the location of "great kingdom" in an oracle that leads Aristotle to define it as an ambiguous form of speech rather than as a "genus for species" metaphor.

61 PW 107.

as Tisamenus that his oracle has more than one interpretation. Without the Spartan intervention, this oracle might not be recognized as multivalent and ambiguous. Yet, another genus-for-species metaphor underscores how the interpretations of oracles in their framing story help determine whether an oracle might be considered ambiguous.

When Dorieus, the younger brother of Cleomenes, leaves Sparta, he receives advice from Antichares of Eleon to take Eryx, the region in western Sicily that belonged to Heracles and thus to Dorieus. Dorieus consults with Delphi and is told “to take it”.<sup>62</sup> In Italy, he is asked by the Crotoniates to help them take Sybaris, a request he promptly meets. Yet he does not take Eryx, the land he set out for. The Sybarites claim that Dorieus did not succeed in establishing Eryx because he went beyond what Delphi predicted and engaged in battle as an ally of the Crotoniates. The Sybarites’ reasoning is not typical of the sorts of reasoning one finds in the Delphic tradition. Like the oracle that tells Croesus he will destroy a great kingdom and does not specify which great kingdom, Dorieus’ oracle does not specify which land he will take. Simon Hornblower writes, “The colony in Sicily also failed, although this one was endorsed by Delphi to the extent that he [Dorieus] was promised he would ‘take the place he was sent against’ (but if he took Sybaris then he had in a sense ‘used up’ this oracle prematurely and the oracle was not actually falsified)”.<sup>63</sup> Hornblower’s explanation is consistent with how ancients interpret oracles in the Delphic tradition. Through his discernment that the object the Pythia promised Dorieus was unstated and hence unclear, Hornblower thereby has made the Delphic oracle ambiguous. A consideration of oracle performances that includes interpretations thus contributes to the classification of whether a metaphor or homonym can be read in more than one way and hence whether an oracle might be considered ambiguous. This suggests that a purely formal analysis of oracles will yield a different classification of their elements and hence an oracle’s ambiguity.<sup>64</sup> A look at homonyms will confirm this observation, and thus point to a key difference in the elements shared by Heraclitus’ sayings and the oracles.

A contingent of Phocaeans who flee from their home in Asia Minor when under attack by Harpagus and the Persians settles in the town of Alalia in Corsica.<sup>65</sup> This site was founded by Phocaeans some twenty years earlier on the advice of an oracle that told them to found Cynus. Cynus is the ancient Greek name for Corsica. Because the new contingent of Pho-

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62 PW 72.

63 Hornblower 2007: 110.

64 See the discussion of PW 8 above, especially n. 53.

65 PW 49.

caean causes so much trouble in Alalia for their neighbors, they are attacked and decide to leave Corsica and establish Elea. Herodotus explains that they founded this new colony because a man from Posidonia informed them that when the Pythia advised them to establish Cynus, she meant the hero not the island. Without the framing narrative, the capacity of the homonym Cynus to generate two interpretations would not be apparent. Such is also the case in another oracle with a homonym. When Cleomenes of Sparta sets out to defeat the Argives, he receives an oracle that he will “take Argos” (Ἄργος αἰρήσειν). After he burns down a grove on the Argive plain, he learns that it was sacred to a hero named Argos, and shouts that Apollo has deceived him when he said, “take Argos”. Cleomenes realizes that he has unwittingly fulfilled the oracle in a way he had neither anticipated nor wished.<sup>66</sup> Cleomenes’ interpretation allows us to identify a word as a homonym that refers to two different things. Framing narratives, then, begin to shift any formal analysis of the devices that might account for oracular ambiguity into one that considers context and performance.<sup>67</sup> The presence of framing narratives therefore plays a critical role in understanding Delphic ambiguity and requires some consideration because Heraclitus’ sayings lack such frames.

All of the elements in Delphic oracles that cause confusion are best understood as narrative motives in so far as they create confusion on the part of Delphi’s clients and interest on the part of the listener of a Delphic tale. The client’s response, especially when it is a misreading, spurs observation not on the efficacy of Apollo’s prophecy, but on how oracles mean, because the search for what will come to be the correct interpretation is tantamount to the search for the future. The dramatic endings of oracular tales suture the gap between word and thing that an oracle initially presents. So forceful is this suturing that one forgets that the oracle posed a possible opening between words and the world. Since this gap is often displaced onto and evaluated as a measure of the foolishness or arrogance of the enquirer, the interpretative dimensions of oracles are easily overlooked. And yet, it would be a mistake to see interpretative mistakes only as indications of the character of Delphic clients, even if Delphic tales reap delight in their listeners because so often the mighty, like Croesus, are laid low because of something as silly as a mule.

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66 PW 86.

67 Murray (2001: 31 n. 36) goes so far as to invert the relationship between oracle and framing narrative in assessing the authenticity of oracles: Fontenrose, Murray writes, “takes a skeptical view of all oracles which serve as a basis for moralizing historical narratives; but that is often to invert the relationship between fixed text (oracle) and flexible reality: it is the event which is ‘quasi-historical’, not the oracle”.

Delphic divination and Delphic tales codified an interest in interpretation and indicated that the universe is measured in divine terms or words that hover on the edges of human understanding. It would be a mistake to let the likes of Croesus or the wit of many Delphic tales distract us from speculative and experimental modes of thought that were part of the divinatory ritual at Delphi and Delphic tales. Each provided a structure in which to reflect upon how the gods may oversee human affairs from a distance that may or may not be traversed by human beings. Each also established a suspicion that a word may not mean what it appears to mean, or what one may desire it mean. In the latter instance, oracles implicitly address how human desires inflect interpretation, though not the course of events that the oracle indicates. The interpretative posture Delphi inculcated or encouraged depended upon the ambiguous style of Delphic oracles. Whether in all instances the Pythia generated this ambiguity or an interpreter, such as the Phocaeans or Cleomenes, was motivated to find it in order to interpret the oracle in a way that was favorable to his desires is not easily determined.

In his recent examination of allegorical readings in antiquity, Peter Struck demonstrates that oracular interpretation contributed to an artistic and philosophical interest in how literary texts and the words and symbols in them acquire meaning.<sup>68</sup> Struck canvasses the overlap between interpretations of divine signs and allegorical interpretations of poetic texts, and observes that both sorts of interpretation pursue the connection between a word or symbol and its ontological referent.<sup>69</sup> Such early allegorical and oracular interpretations, he writes, “can be fruitfully supplemented by a brief look at a few of the more prominent pre-Aristotelian theories of language” such as that of Heraclitus,<sup>70</sup> while noting that later Neoplatonists and Stoics “borrow power for poetic symbols from divine omens” even more than from such early philosophical treatments of language.<sup>71</sup> Struck’s discussion of the mutual influences among oracular interpretation, philosophical reflections on language, and allegorical readings of poetic works, largely documented in later texts, suggests that oracular tales and specifi-

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68 For example, Struck (2004: 38) outlines how the commentator of the Derveni Papyrus, one of the first to lay the foundations of allegorical interpretation, treats the poetic text as “a repository of great (and even sacred) hidden truths, which are conveyed in riddles through the whole poem, in a manner that resembles the semantically dense language of oracular speech, esoteric philosophy and cultic practice”.

69 Struck 2004: 170–192.

70 Struck 2004: 51

71 Struck 2004: 187. Most (1999) argues that allegorical readings of poetry were recuperative acts of philosophers.



cally Delphic tales, not simply Delphic style, with their wide oral currency and attention to interpretation, were likely one of the sources for Heraclitus' reflection on language. The variation in instances of ambiguity, whether created by the oracle or its interpreter, provided a particularly rich vein of reflection on language for Heraclitus to mine.

Heraclitus makes several references to Delphi in addition to "the lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither declares nor conceals, but gives a sign". Heraclitus describes the (Delphic) Sibyl whose "voice carries through a thousand years because of the god who speaks through her".<sup>72</sup> Heraclitus also plays with the Delphic motto "know thyself" in two fragments, "I went in search of myself" and "It belongs to all men to know themselves and to think well".<sup>73</sup> The first statement suggests that one must *search* for one's self and hence that one is separated from or other than the self that Delphi suggests one ought to know. The second seems to imply that self-knowledge is readily available, and may not require the effort implied in the Delphic saying or in Heraclitus' quest. While Kahn considers this second saying a "formal challenge to the Delphic proverb", it deploys the same verb as Delphi (γινώσκειν) and may in fact be consonant with Delphi's saying. In both, one ought to and is able to know one's self.<sup>74</sup>

Even if we allow that Heraclitus' precise meaning may or may not comport with Delphi's motto, it is significant that Heraclitus is in conversation with the Delphic tradition, and that both are concerned with knowledge about the self and cosmos. Here it seems as if Heraclitus is not simply shaping or preserving the Delphic tradition.<sup>75</sup> Rather, he is articulating an aspect of the Delphic tradition that is largely overlooked in modern scholarship, namely its concern with knowledge more broadly understood (i.e. not in relation to a particular question).<sup>76</sup> Most importantly, Heraclitus' references to Delphi, unlike his many references to other poets and thinkers, are unique in so far as he offers no critique of Delphi.<sup>77</sup> In Carol Poster's description, "Heraclitus is one of several archaic thinkers who wrestled with the problem of expressing ideas in verbal genres belonging to a cultural tradition that they were criticizing. They had available the discourses of ritual, traditional epic, and ordinary speech, but none of these

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72 D 92.

73 D 101 and D 116

74 Leshner 1983: 159–163 on Heraclitus' use of γινώσκειν compared to Homer's.

75 Barker 2006: 3.

76 Granger 2004b: n. 17 on Delphi's influence on Heraclitus.

77 See D 5, 15, 40, 42, 56, 57, 58, 81, 104, 106, 121, 129, A 22 and A 23 for criticisms of poets and thinkers and D 5, 14, 15, 68, 69, 92, 93, 96 for criticisms of religious practices and ideas, with Adomenas 1999, who examines how Heraclitus re-interpreted, not simply rejected, religious practices.

were precisely commensurable, formally or ideologically, with their radically new conceptions of the world".<sup>78</sup> Unlike Homer and Hesiod – the dominant cultural forces of his times who offered both an account of the divine and the foundations of the universe, and a manner of speaking about them<sup>79</sup> – Delphi's manner of describing a world where mules are kings and mute sons speak was commensurable, formally and, I would argue, ideologically, to the truth Heraclitus was aiming to explicate and the manner in which he wished to express it.

Indeed, Heraclitus is rather a Pythia manqué. Like her, he asserts his authority over his listeners because of their ignorance. In "noncomprehending even after hearing | they are like the deaf | to them witnesses the saying | absent yet present",<sup>80</sup> Heraclitus expresses a concern with knowledge associated with the senses, particularly hearing and its difference from understanding, an idea that appears in the first Herodotean oracle,<sup>81</sup> and in so doing Heraclitus adopts the Pythia's posture of contempt for her audience. The Pythia tells the Megarians that they do not deserve to be considered in any account of noble peoples, that the Spartans have asked for too much in their council about attacking Arcadia, that Aglaos is happier than Gyges who asked if he was happiest of all, that Myson is wiser than the client who wished it was himself, that Apollo will not answer King Alyattes until he performs a religious task, that Croesus is foolish.<sup>82</sup> Rebuking kings is a favorite pastime of Delphi as these examples suggest. While Solon may have to educate rather than berate Croesus for his excessive confidence in his good fortune, Apollo speaking through the Pythia requires no such niceties. Neither does Heraclitus when he takes aim at Homer, Archilochus and Pythagoras, or his audience for their inability to understand what he says. Heraclitus has a distinctly authoritative oracular stance which found its most well-known and unimpeachable expression in the Pythia at Delphi. Moreover, the Pythia articulates an almost knowable divine knowledge in order to claim authority. Heraclitus similarly posits a possible human knowledge in a parallel manner. The assertion of the possibility of knowledge is the basis of each one's claim to authority. Each recognizes that what blocks access to the possible knowledge they offer is the shortcomings of their listeners and each implies that they and their

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78 Poster 2006: 2.

79 Robb 1994.

80 Robb 1983: 185–186, who quotes D 34.

81 PW 52. On knowledge and sense in Heraclitus, see Nussbaum 1972, Leshner 1983, Hussey 1982, Granger 2000 and 2004a, Graham 2008.

82 PW 1, 31, 244, 245, 50, 55. See also PW 7, 24, 41, 93.

words might be the vehicle through which men may mediate their desire to know and understand.

There are of course good reasons why Delphi's influence has been seen only in style. Heraclitus' sayings and the Delphic corpus are different in many ways. Yet, I propose that there are more similarities than have thus far been recognized, and that the admittedly great differences between them have been accentuated by the presence or absence of a narrative frame. Oracular tales have an internal structure, the announcement of the oracle, and an external dynamic, the interpretative quest of the client, while Heraclitus' sayings have only the internal structure – they lack interpretations provided by ancient auditors, though not ancient commentators. In oracular tales, one cannot avoid the likes of Croesus. Through his plight, one senses the activity of a historian who must follow clues in order to understand events in ways that seem plausible and even inevitable. The question of contingency and causality is at the heart of history writing and at the heart of divination, and no historian wants to follow Croesus' example. Thus, one must supplant Croesus and other such obtuse Delphic clients and present these tales not as worthy of an exegesis comparable to Croesus', but as propaganda and/or ritual to be painstakingly pulled apart and then reassembled correctly, that is, in historically reasonable ways. It is no wonder that the speculative nature of these tales and their oracles is occluded. It stymies historical analysis of the facts of the matter.

On the other hand, when reading Heraclitus, the Ephesians whom Heraclitus thinks should all be hung for their stupidity, occupy a far less significant place in Heraclitus' works and so modern exegetes speculate about the meaning of Heraclitus' words uninhibited by an incompetent alter ego. This state of affairs need not imply that the Pythia's oracles were not also domains of intellectual speculation, whose form, content and tone inspired Heraclitus.<sup>83</sup> On the contrary, Heraclitus and Delphi participated in and shared compositional techniques, acoustic elements that served as mnemonic devices as Greece moved from oral poetry to orational prose, as well as metaphors typical of riddles, all of which generated questions about how words mean. More precisely, Heraclitus borrowed from Delphi more than just a style because the Delphic tradition had more than a just style to emulate. The Pythia's authoritative stance conjured by her use of oral *technopaegnia* compelled listeners, of whom Heraclitus might be counted, to consider how words might or might not correspond to the world, and how

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83 I borrow the phrase "domains of intellectual speculation" from Sally Humphries (2004), who interrogates whether it is appropriate to understand Greek religious practices as solely or primarily practices, and not rather as forms of intellectual speculation.

language in its polyvalence might occlude the divine and hidden structure of the world in its present, past and future dimensions.

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# “Gods Cannot Tell Lies”: Riddling and Ancient Greek Divination\*

Frederick G. Naerebout & Kim Beerden

## 1. Introduction

Plato, in the *Apology*, presents Socrates as wondering about the pronouncement of the Delphic oracle that “no man is wiser than Socrates”.<sup>1</sup> This must be a true pronouncement, because it is against the nature of the gods to tell lies. Thus Socrates supposes it to be a riddle, for he himself knows that he is not wise at all. He starts looking for someone wiser than himself in order to confront the god and learn what the hidden message of the oracle could be. The outcome of his quest is that the pronouncement is no riddle at all: it is the plain truth, for only Socrates is fully aware of what he does not know. This makes him the wisest of all men after all.

Socrates’ supposition – or rather Plato’s fictive version of it<sup>2</sup> – is that gods cannot tell lies, but can be expected to hide the true meaning of their words by ἀνίττεσθαι: speaking dark language, or riddling words. When we look at modern discussions of the riddle in the Greek world, it appears that constant reference is being made to Socrates, to the story of Oedipus and the Sphinx, and to a series of famous examples from Greek divination – oracular pronouncements.<sup>3</sup> This is somewhat odd: the interest seems to focus on what we would call the atypical, but what others see as central to

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1 Pl. *Ap.* 20e–21b.

2 Montuori (1990) argues persuasively for a complete fabrication by Plato.

3 For the sphinx, see Baum-vom Felde 2006 and Katz 2006, both with extensive references. For a famous analysis of the meaning and function of the riddle in Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, Vernant 1978. See also, more recently, Rokem 1996. Note that ancient sources describe the riddles of the Sphinx as oracular: see Segal 1999: 237–238 for a brilliant analysis.

the ancient concept of riddling. One of the reasons they see it that way is because the enigmatic oracle is seen as the original form of riddling, while riddling as a pastime is then supposed to be a later development.<sup>4</sup> But in fact, the majority of riddles documented in our sources do not belong in the realm of religion and myth; still, these “typical riddles”, i.e. riddles from a non-religious context, have received rather less attention.<sup>5</sup> This balance ought to be redressed. But in order to be able to do so, we should first confront what we have called the atypical riddles head-on, and see what we can make of them. Here we again have to restrict ourselves, and we will look at oracular pronouncements only. A single representative example should suffice to illustrate the common viewpoint: “The responses of Greek oracles are often formulated in enigmatical language and use standard techniques of riddles (metaphors and symbols, paradoxes and *adynata*, ambiguous or polysemous words etc.) in order to conceal their true meaning and mislead the recipient; thus, the oracular response functions as a ‘divine riddle’ propounded by the god to a mortal”.<sup>6</sup> There are definitely some preconceptions at work here that need looking into.<sup>7</sup> Exactly how often are oracular responses riddling and could they really be intended to mislead?

As riddles are at the core of our investigation, we should first of all establish what we understand by the word “riddle”.<sup>8</sup> A simple, but workable definition of the riddle is the following: “a question or statement intention-

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- 4 Edwards – Wright – Browning 1970, in speaking of the history of *riddles*, not of oracles: “the Oracle, for example, is typically expressed in enigmatic form” (implied is that the primordial riddle is oracular). Ziegler 1975, again on riddles: “Am Anfang steht im griechischen Mythos das Rätsel der Sphinx”. Colli 1977: 437: “la derivazione dell’enigma dalla sfera della divinazione”. This reflects ancient speculative thought: Paus. 8.8.3, tr. Jones 1933: “In the days of old those Greeks who were considered wise spoke their sayings not straight out but in riddles” (as was said about Orpheus, Heraclitus and many others).
  - 5 The most relevant literature is almost a century old: Ohlert 1912, Schultz 1909; 1914. A recent contribution: Jedrkiewicz 1997: 40–48.
  - 6 Konstantakos 2004: 130–131.
  - 7 The association of oracles and riddles is engrained in modern language use: in Dutch “orakelspreuk” has come to mean “riddle”, “orakeltaal” is “dark language”, “orakelen”, like German “orakeln”, is “to speak darkly or ambiguously”, in German “das war ein Orakel für mich” means “that was a mystery to me”. This usage is rare in English, and absent in French and Italian. It is present, however, in modern Greek. The reception of the “riddling oracle” is a subject that should be addressed in detail.
  - 8 On the need for proper etic definitions: Snoek 1987: 5. By concentrating on the riddle, we also want to pay homage to Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595–1640), Polish Jesuit, Neo-Latin poet and author of the treatise *De acuto et arguto*, which is in part devoted to investigating the literary device of the *acutum*, the “conceit”.



ally phrased to require ingenuity in ascertaining its answer or meaning".<sup>9</sup> Ambiguity is inherent in the riddle, but the riddle is something more than an ambiguous pronouncement. The riddle is one particular linguistic way of expressing ambiguity: "inherent in the riddle is a deliberate ambiguity which is designed to reveal and conceal its subject at one and the same time. Success in untangling the true meaning of the riddle-sentence from the knots of verbal deceit depends upon the confirmation of the solution by the riddle poser".<sup>10</sup> A true riddle consists basically of a description ("it ploughs") and what linguists call a "block element" ("but leaves no furrow"); from this the referent has to be puzzled out (in this example: "a ship"). There are many variants, but in order for a statement to be considered a riddle there has to be a replacement of some kind, that is, the statement in the riddle is metaphoric – but the metaphor is deliberately left incomplete, with an element concealed, or it is contradictory.<sup>11</sup>

There is much more to be said about riddles, but the one thing it would be useful in the present context to add to the above, is that riddles, although of course they can be written down or even composed in writing, are essentially an *oral* form of wordplay.<sup>12</sup> We would rather not speak of orality in

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- 9 *Oxford English Dictionary* online s.v. "riddle" (July 2012). Cf. Augarde 2003: 1: "A question or statement that requires ingenuity to understand and answer, usually because it is phrased in an ambiguous or misleading way". In fields of study as varied as Psychology and Folklore Studies, scholars have produced countless definitions of the riddle. They tend to stress different aspects, but not always in helpful ways: "an overt question with a covert answer" (but riddles need not be questions), or "The riddle is a problem whose solution evokes a good deal of pleasure and humor" (but riddling is not always and never only fun: it can be a highly serious form of play), and so on. For these definitions, see G. B. Milner ap. Maranda 1976, Layton 1976: 239, and Shultz 1974: 100.
  - 10 Ben-Amos 1976: 249. "By the riddle poser": when we speak of "solving the riddle", it is the riddler and not the riddlee who provides the ultimate solution. The riddles of traditional oral culture are not problems to be analysed: see Hamnett 1967: 384 on those to whom a riddle has been posed: "they are more likely to be trying to recall a *known but forgotten* answer than to be genuinely attempting to tackle a new problem". Alternatively, the fun lies in coming up with an alternative answer: see Katz 2006: 184 (Katz' 2006 article has much worthwhile to offer on riddles and riddling in general; see also Thatcher 2000).
  - 11 McDowell 1994; Hamnett 1967; Welsh 1993 (from where we took our examples). For typologies, see Konstantakos 2004: 120–133, or Abrahams and Dundes 1972: 131. A main variant amongst what are considered "true riddles", are punning riddles, based on some lexical or grammatical ambiguity ("what turns without moving?" Answer: "milk"). A very particular type of replacement is the homonymic oracle – frequently encountered in ancient sources: Pausanias and/or his spokespersons were very fond of them.
  - 12 Ong 1982: 53: "the riddle belongs in the oral world". Wordplay has several so-called "conversational genres": jokes, riddles, and so on; see, e.g., the overview in

this context, but of oral tradition or oral culture (e.g. “the oral tradition of children”); one should compare the concepts of orature and oracy, introduced or re-defined by African scholars Pio Zirimu and Austin Bukenya.<sup>13</sup> It should not be concluded from the essentially oral nature of riddles that riddles in Greek literary texts are representative of oral culture because of being riddles (or because of their formal aspects, such as a metrical composition). The riddle in whatever form can be conceived of in writing – and might indeed be introduced into a written text to evoke the spoken word.<sup>14</sup> And in the same way in which an “oral riddle” may be not oral at all, an unambiguous pronouncement may be utterly oral.

The play element of “wordplay” has remained somewhat implicit in the above definition, but riddling definitely is a form of play. “The riddle is a form of guessing game that has been a part of the folklore of most cultures from ancient times”.<sup>15</sup> Usually, riddling games or contests are part of structured social occasions – and (to avoid any misconceptions arising from the words “play” and “game”) these can range from joyous to very serious occasions. The riddle is essentially “a serious exercise in cultural reflexivity”, by which one can “measure the limits of culture”.<sup>16</sup> Punning, riddling and so on and so forth, while universal amongst language users, are also highly culture-specific. If we want to truly understand a culture, we will have to acquire a high level of cultural competence – and that high level includes all kinds of wordplay.<sup>17</sup>

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a classic study, Finnegan 1970. Luz (2010) discusses riddles in an excursus, as merely related to *technopaegnia*. The difference seems to lie in the essentially oral nature of the riddle – but Luz does not say so, nor does she discuss the uses of writing in the creation and reception of *technopaegnia*. Of course, the distinction between *technopaegnia* as defined by Luz and other kinds of wordplay is far from absolute.

13 See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o 2007, Kaboré 2007, Mwangi 2007. That these concepts are hardly encountered, let alone discussed, outside the sphere of (East) African literacy/orality studies, shows how regrettably small the general impact of African scholarship is.

14 Cf. n. 53 below.

15 *Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Ultimate Reference Suite* (Chicago 2009) s.v. “riddle”.

16 McDowell 1994: 3578, 3580. Play is used here in the sense in which it was used by Huizinga 1938.

17 Within the limited space allotted to this paper, when dealing with general issues, we tend to use large (and contentious) concepts. “Culture” is one of these; we are aware of the debate surrounding it, but think it can be retained as a valid way of speaking about historical (and present) realities: see Brumann 1999 (including comments), or Baldwin et al. 2006: xv: “The notion of culture is quickly gaining momentum both in scholarly explanation and in the everyday lives of people as a key aspect of explaining their social reality”. Different: Gillison 2010. A good

Whether the Greek oracular pronouncements that we are going to study here are always “true riddles” as defined above, can be doubted. But they are certainly riddles in the somewhat wider sense of expressions with a deliberate ambiguity resulting from metaphoric replacement. They have been called “riddles” in modern discussions of the Greek oracles, which finds a parallel in ancient Greek sources which speak of oracular language as *griphos* or *ainigma*, “riddle”.<sup>18</sup> For brevity’s sake, we will speak of “riddles” whenever an oracular pronouncement is ambiguous, without further specifications – which would not make any difference as far as our conclusions are concerned.

## 2. Riddling Oracles

At least according to the literary sources, the interpretation of supernatural signs could be given in the shape of a riddle – especially where oracles were concerned.<sup>19</sup> The most famous Greek example of a riddle as the outcome of a divinatory session at the oracle, can be found in Herodotus. Croesus, the king of the Lydians, asked the Pythia at Delphi if he would reign over the Persians for a long time:

To this the Pythian priestess answered as follows: “When the Medes have a mule as king, | Just then, tender-footed Lydian, by the stone-strewn Hermus | Flee and do not stay, and do not be ashamed to be a coward”. When he heard these verses, Croesus was pleased with them above all, for he thought that a mule would never be king of the Medes instead of a man, and therefore that he and his posterity would never lose his empire.<sup>20</sup>

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overview of this debate for the ancient world in Hall 2004: 35–50. For a basic, but sympathetic argument in favour of studying ancient “folklore” as a key to cultural history, see Ingemark and Ingemark 2007.

- 18 *Ainigma* and *griphos* are used mostly interchangeably. For attempts – ancient and modern – to differentiate between the two: Luz 2010: 144–145.
- 19 We see the oracular process as follows: some medium (the Pythia at Delphi, the tree at Dodona, etc.) functions as vehicle for the god to reveal his sign. This sign (which is always ambiguous in itself) is then converted into a message by an interpreter. It is this message that might be given the shape of a riddle. For some introductions to the topic (which do not necessarily agree with the way we see the process – there are other opinions on this), see Johnston 2005: 10, and Vernant 1974.
- 20 Hdt. 1.55.1–56.1, tr. Godley 1920: Ἡ δὲ Πυθίη οἱ χρᾶ τάδε: “Ἄλλ’ ὅταν ἡμίονος βασιλεὺς Μήδοισι γένηται, | καὶ τότε, Λυδὲ ποδαβρέ, | πολυψήφιδά παρ’ Ἑρμῶν | φεύγειν μὴδὲ μένειν, μὴδ’ αἰδεῖσθαι κακὸς εἶναι”. Τοῦτοισι ἐλθοῦσι τοῖσι ἔπεσι ὁ Κροῖσος πολλὸν τι μάλιστα πάντων ἥσθη, ἐλπίζων ἡμίονον οὐδαμὰ ἀντ’ ἀνδρὸς βασιλεύσειν Μήδων, οὐδ’ ὧν αὐτὸς οὐδ’ οἱ ἐξ αὐτοῦ παύσεσθαι κοτε τῆς ἀρχῆς.

Croesus was pleased with this *adynaton* – which is the way in which he interpreted it. Unfortunately, Croesus had not solved the riddle (in fact, he did not see it was a riddle at all: we will come back to that). His enemy, Cyrus – King of the Medes – was the child of a mother of high status while his father was of low status: a mule.<sup>21</sup> As this example shows, the product of a session at the Delphic oracle could, at least as portrayed in the literary sources, consist of a riddle that had to be solved by its recipient – life or death, the survival or destruction of a kingdom could all depend on the outcome. The story of Croesus is only one among a substantial number of literary accounts of the riddling nature of the product of the divinatory process.<sup>22</sup>

The first question to answer is how we should see these riddling oracles: were they oracular reality? There has been much debate whether these examples of divinatory riddles are a reflection of actual divinatory practice; as these are literary sources there is obviously room for such debate. Some of these reports are obviously narrative ploys, others are possibly authentic (in the sense of relating the actual answers of actual oracle sites to actual questions) – which can lead to at least three different conclusions. Two of these are common: the first is to pronounce some divinatory riddles authentic, and others not.<sup>23</sup> Of course, this can lead to endless discussions about the criteria for such judgements. The second is to maintain that even though it is impossible to say which story is authentic and which not, the stories still show us what Greek divinatory practice was like. Rather less common is the third conclusion: that these sources should be completely *rejected* as evidence for Greek divinatory practice.<sup>24</sup> In fact, there is a fourth approach: this says that the question is no good, and that whether

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21 Hdt. 1.91.5.

22 For an overview, see Schultz 1909: 65–81.

23 Best known are Parke and Wormell's division of Delphic oracles in historic and fictive, and Fontenrose's division of the same in historic, quasi-historic, legendary and fictive (cf. nn. 45–46 below). The most sophisticated analysis of oracular responses is that by Aune (1983: 54–65). Flower (2008: 218) states as his “subjective opinion” that those oracles that “refer the problem back to the client” are the ones *most likely* to be historical.

24 Fontenrose (1978) gives proper (and generally ignored) arguments for considering as inauthentic all riddling oracles (and other oracles in the literary tradition). Otherwise, hardly anybody seems to go all the way. Rougemont (2005) is extremely critical of the whole idea of ambiguous oracular responses, but nevertheless wants to save some examples from the wreck (“la tradition antique est trop ancienne et trop unanime sur ce point pour être mensongère”, p. 233; why this should be so escapes us). But see Pucci 1996: 152: “Nella vita pratica, invece, il vaticinio è fenomeno corrente, ubbidisce a varie esperienze ed esigenze di vita e si esprime *solitamente in modo chiaro*”, italics ours.

any individual oracular pronouncement is authentic or not does not matter – the important thing is that this is how Greeks conceived their oracles.<sup>25</sup> Whether Greeks thought of their oracles as riddling is, as far as we are concerned, still an open question. When we want to know what actual oracular practice was, as the present authors do, we have to address that question.

Let us first look at the arguments of those who defend the historicity of the riddling oracles. The most usual way of explaining why the outcomes of divination should be ambiguous – this includes the riddles – is that it is a way for divination to continue to exist: if the interpretation of the signs given by the gods (which signs commonly are ambiguous in themselves) is ambiguous as well, the onus of "getting it right" is shifted to the individual or collective body receiving the message. If they misinterpret the riddle (or, more generally, are led astray by some ambiguous wording), in the end the supernatural is not to blame, nor is the oracle which gave out the oracular message. It is human error, at the recipients' end, and this is all there is to it. The reputation of god and of diviner is rescued. Robert Parker says that in this way "the client [is forced] to construct by interpretation his own response. ... Apollo referred the problem back to them" – at least, this is what happened in the case of "delicate enquiries".<sup>26</sup> However, reading Parker's analysis of oracles and politics, one comes upon several examples of fairly "delicate enquiries" that nevertheless called for, and got, straightforward answers. When Parker speaks of oracular pronouncements as "apparently objective and uniquely authoritative", delivering "reassurance" that one decides on the best course of action, "referral to binding arbitration", and "leading to a satisfactory dénouement", it seems self-contradictory to suppose that such pronouncements could be enigmatic.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Struck 2003: 172; Flower 2008: 216; Rosenberger 2001: 12–13: "daher bleibt gleich, ob ein Orakelspruch – wie die meisten – *ex eventu* erfunden ist oder nicht. Wichtig ist vielmehr die Tatsache, dass er berichtet wird. Jede noch so durchsichtige Fiktion gewinnt einen hohen Wert, wenn man sich fragt, welche Botschaft sie transportieren soll". Rosenberger's refusal to single out our only extensive epigraphic corpus of oracular questions (and some responses), the *lamellae* from Dodona, seems hypercritical – the very fact that these are almost all questions, and not answers, let alone accounts of oracular success, seems to point towards their authenticity – in the above sense. Maurizio 1997 and also her contribution to this volume moves in a different direction to our approach because we still want to make this admittedly old-fashioned difference between *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, which is something that she deliberately chooses not to do.

26 Parker 2000: 80.

27 Parker 2000: 78. Despite this criticism, we want to stress that Parker's article is one of the most perceptive analyses of ancient divination and its functions.

The whole idea that an oracle would avoid giving a straightforward answer, and would leave things as open as possible, in order to reduce the chances of having it wrong, derives from a modern misconception that there exists some objective yardstick to measure divinatory success. Perhaps because we moderns have very particular ideas about what constitutes success, we do not see that oracles cannot in fact be “wrong”, for the Greek oracle simply advises on “the best course of action”.<sup>28</sup> If things turn out bad, they might very well have been worse if the alternative action had been taken. If something really is wrong, the interpreter has failed, because of lack of knowledge, or because of having been blinded by some all too human emotion, like greed or partisanship.<sup>29</sup> Consider a parallel: if an amulet does not protect one, its users will *not* conclude that the magic formula is ineffective – always allowing for exceptions – but they will say that the amulet and the magic did work after all, because otherwise things would have been worse, or they conclude that they indeed did not work, but not from any inherent ineffectiveness, but because one has done something wrong. There is no need to defend an oracle’s reputation: its reputation cannot be damaged.

Another way of explaining the existence of riddling answers is to argue that the diviners did not so much want to save their skin, but simply acted in accordance with what they supposed to be the very nature of the gods. The gods were riddlers, and Apollo, the oracular god *par excellence*, was a riddler amongst riddlers. “Divine help could be valuable, but the gods often embedded it within problems; ... riddling oracles hid their meanings – and their potential usefulness – behind misleading words that tempted inept interpreters down fatal paths”. The recipient should decode the message – the gods did not do this for you.<sup>30</sup> It is important, however, to stress that misinterpretations lead to tragedies, *not* because people are duped by the supernatural, but because people out of *hybris*, greed, jealousy, spite and whatever bad characteristic or emotion insist on coming up with the wrong solutions to the riddles placed before them.

This presence of ambiguity in divination seems, at first sight, to fit in with common ideas about religious life. Religion does not seem to belong primarily to a realm where maximum clarity of language is necessary or always appreciated. Religion deals in part with things that are impossible

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28 Cf. nn. 60–61 below.

29 In literary sources, characters in the story can reject an oracle as false, as does Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex*; of course, the oracle is not false at all, but the protagonists cannot and want not to accept its consequences. If such stories tell one thing, it is that one should never think of an oracle as wrong.

30 Johnston 2008: 55–56.

or difficult to express in words; these might not be expressed at all (but instead put into imagery, or addressed non-verbally: acoustically or kinetically), but of course we also find a lot of metaphor, and all sorts of ambiguous and round-about ways of speaking about what is in the end unspeakable. The language of mysticism – in many different religious traditions – might be the ultimate example.<sup>31</sup> Giorgio Colli has set the tone here.<sup>32</sup> Giovanni Manetti (referring to Colli) discusses the divine sign as a challenge, obscure, unsolvable: the way Apollo shows his dark, destructive side.<sup>33</sup> The problem here is that no attempt is made to differentiate between the one religious behaviour and the other. Speaking about a god might be rather different from speaking to a god or being spoken to by a god.

Still another explanation is one based on arguments about Greek civic discourse, implying that an ambiguous answer is what the customers wanted to have in order to keep their own options open. Robert Parker explained that Greeks would have liked to get their oracles phrased in an ambiguous way: oracles were only asked in times of need when a decision could not be made easily. In these cases, oracles were only one of the arguments in these difficult decision-making processes and for the Greek *polis* to function properly, there would be a need for at least something to discuss. If the gods were loud and clear, assemblies or councils could not have functioned properly.<sup>34</sup> Croesus was, naturally, not dependent on such debate, but it can be argued that such stories were meant for a Greek audience: they say more about the needs of the audience than about those of Croesus. This can be seen to run into the same difficulties as the first argument: the notion of having maximum leeway to decide for oneself contradicts the notion of seeking for divine guidance in order to minimize uncertainty.

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31 Still, much religious discourse is not more ambiguous than everyday language put to some purely practical purpose (which we tend to call unambiguous, even though quite some ambiguity is involved). This is something altogether different from inconsistency: see Versnel 1990: 1–35. Discourse in a religious context (as in many other contexts) need not be consistent, and is even likely to be inconsistent, inconsistency being a very common phenomenon.

32 Colli 1975: 61–69; 1977: 47–48, and the collection of passages, 339–369, with comments, 435–440.

33 Manetti 1987: 27–56; Jedrkiewicz 1997: 42–43: “Applicato alla sfera religiosa, esso svela le verità nascoste che incombono sull’essistenza; la scienza oracolare è un caso specifico di competenza enigmistica”.

34 Parker 2000: 76, 80.

### 3. The Nature of Greek Divination

Let us explore the nature of ambiguity in the divinatory process in order to offer an alternative answer to the question whether or not riddles were actual oracular practice, and why this would be so. This oracular process started with the observation of a perceived sign from the supernatural by an individual. That sign had either been evoked by the individual, or he would have observed something per chance and judged it to be a sign. Seen from an emic perspective, this sign would always be ambiguous.<sup>35</sup> When Penelope had a dream in which she saw her twenty geese killed by an eagle, she considered this to be a sign: the dream was meaningful. But it needed interpretation in order to clarify its meaning.<sup>36</sup> The divinatory sign – in whichever shape, the rustling of leaves, the throw of a dice – is in itself meaningless. So someone has to pronounce the meaning of the sign. The same with the flight of birds, the missing lobe of a liver and so on: once an occurrence had been recognized as being a sign, that sign had to be interpreted, either by a layman or by a specialized diviner. The final pronouncement could, naturally, be a straightforward “positive” or “negative”: the ideal situation for the recipient of the sign. Yet, it could theoretically also be a statement that was ambiguous, leaving room for different explanations. Such an ambiguous statement could possibly take the form of a riddle – which is of course what literary sources about oracles show us. To take up our previous example of a sign, Penelope’s dream: the interpretation of that sign could be the arrival of an avenger who kills the suitors (straightforward) or “an eagle will come upon the geese and kill them all” (riddling – the same message encrypted in a simile). The recipient of the riddling interpretation would then still need – as a third step in the process – to resolve a riddle before he gained some kind of guidance about the future.

Are ambiguous pronouncements in the shape of riddles really typical of divination in general and oracles in particular? In order to formulate an answer to this question, we will compare the literary evidence with its oracular riddles to the epigraphical evidence. We will look at Delphi and

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35 Only a direct spoken answer (spoken by the god or his mouthpiece) would be unambiguous: unless that answer was not in ordinary comprehensible language – in the case of the Pythia as mouthpiece of Apollo at Delphi, we are unsure of the shape of this oral sign. For a brief overview of opinions on these matters, see Rosenberger 2001: 54–58.

36 As in this case also happened within the course of her dream: see Hom. *Od.* 9.525–550.



Dodona – two oracle sites with an equal reputation for riddling – and at Hellenistic oracles:

By such dreams was I, to my distress, beset night after night, until at last I gained courage to tell my father of the dreams that haunted me. And he sent many a messenger to Pytho and Dodona so that he might discover what deed or word of his would find favor with the gods. But they returned with report of oracles, riddling, obscure, and darkly worded.<sup>37</sup>

This reputation of the oracle at Dodona for ambiguity and riddling is not borne out by local practice. Striking epigraphic materials were found at Dodona: many *lamellae*, small strips of lead containing questions to the oracle, and in a few cases an answer from the oracle, on their reverse side. Less than 200 of these texts have been published so far, and there are many more (c. 1,100) that are still unpublished.<sup>38</sup> With a few exceptions, they stem from the sixth century to around 250 BC.<sup>39</sup> An example of the type of questioning is the following:

Whether it will be better for me if I go to Sybaris and if I do these things?<sup>40</sup>

Esther Eidinow has recently compiled a catalogue of questions to the oracle and she includes answers, in as far as these are extant. From those answers included by Eidinow – she provides 15 in total – not one is clearly ambiguous.<sup>41</sup> All are plain and simple and are comparable to the following example in clarity:

37 Aesch. *PV* 655–662, tr. Weir Smyth 1922: τοιοῖσδε πάσας εὐφρόνας ὀνειράσι | ξυνειχόμεν δῶστηνος, ἔστε δὴ πατρί | ἔτλην γεγωνεῖν νυκτίφοιτ’ ὀνειράτα· | ὁ δ’ ἔς τε Πυθὸ καὶ Δωδώνην πυκνοῦς | θεοπρόπους ἴαλλεν, ὥς μάθοι τί χρὴ | δρῶντ’ ἢ λέγοντα δαίμοσιν πράσσειν φίλα. | ἦκον δ’ ἀναγγέλλοντες αἰολοστόμους | χρησμούς, ἀσήμους δυσκρίτως τ’ εἰρημένους.

38 Lhôte (2007: 70–72; 345–360), and Eidinow (2007: 72–124), have recently published, re-published, and categorized the known Dodona texts.

39 Parke 1967: 101; Lhôte 2007: 11.

40 Αἶ κα μέλλι ἐς [Σύ]βαριν ἰόντι λόϊον | ἔμεν [κ]α πράτοντι ταῦτα. Tr. (and bibliography) Eidinow 2007: 75, no. 2. It is generally accepted that this kind of questions are first-person ones, despite the lack of first-person pronouns.

41 Perhaps with the exception of one, but as we have no question to go with it, it is impossible to tell. This is the response that Eidinow (2007: 111, no. 5), translates as “It is not safe but for the man destroying everything” (οὐκ ἐστὶ ἀσφάλεια ἀλλ’ ἀπωλέωντι πάντα). Of the other fourteen possible answers (of which a table can be found in Eidinow 2007: 123–124) one appears to be mistakenly included (p. 111, no. 4) and two are too fragmentary to judge. The other eleven are not always easy to understand, but certainly do not look like riddles. In translation: “In Kroton” (cf. n. 42 below), “Stay”; “Bear with your defeat” / “Put up with her”; “You should do nothing by land”; “Be content with the one woman you already have” (*EBGR* 2010: no. 28); “Slaves living apart”; “To/for him setting off to Hermione”; “God ... to Zeus the father, concerning ... to Fortune a libation, to Herakles Erechtheis, to Athena Patroa” (to do with sacrifices and libations); “Stay on land, completely”;

Side A: God ... Good Luck. About possessions and about a place to live: whether (it would be) better for him and his children and his wife in Kroton? Side B: In Kroton.<sup>42</sup>

More importantly still, the questions seem to be such as to require a straightforward answer. But that could be modern prejudice, of course. Also, these are private enquiries. Would answers to public enquiries come in a more riddling format? In Dodona at least this was not the case. Evidence comes from Demosthenes, who relates the gist of two public oracles in one of his speeches. These oracles are straightforward.<sup>43</sup>

To the people of the Athenians the prophet of Zeus announces. Whereas ye have let pass the seasons of the sacrifice and of the sacred embassy, he bids you send nine chosen envoys, and that right soon. To Zeus of the Ship sacrifice three oxen and with each ox three sheep; to Dione one ox and a brazen table for the offering which the people of the Athenians have offered.

The prophet of Zeus in Dodona announces. To Dionysus pay public sacrifices and mix a bowl of wine and set up dances; to Apollo the Averter sacrifice an ox and wear garlands, both free men and slaves, and observe one day of rest; to Zeus, the giver of wealth, a white bull.<sup>44</sup>

Even if we assume that Demosthenes adapted the text of these oracles to the context of his argument, one can hardly imagine why he would have filled them with such clear, prosaic details if he and his audience had expected them to be gnomic utterances. As we can see, the questions asked of the supernatural at Dodona seemed to request unambiguous answers, and the answers known to us were exactly that.

Delphi had an even stronger reputation for providing riddling answers to questions, at least in the literary sources. Croesus' oracles came from Delphi (but also Oropos). With Delphi, we easily run into difficulties. The responses (and questions) found *in situ* in Dodona on rolled-up *lamellae* must have played some part in the actual enquiries made at the oracle. But for Delphi the responses have been recorded at some later date: on stone in

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"But if I do not send to Arybbas, but it stays here..."; "For Leton, it was advantageous ... not having confidence ... in the man from Thourioi when he placed...".

42 Side A: Θεός: τύχα ἀγαθή: | περὶ πανπασίας καὶ περὶ φοικέσιος | ἱς Κρ(ό)τονα ἔβέλτιον καὶ ἄμεινο(ν) | αὐτοῖ καὶ γενε|ῶν καὶ γυναι|κί. Side B: Ἐν Κρότονι. Tr. (and bibliography) Eidinow 2007: 76, no. 5.

43 For another attestation of the clarity of the Dodonaic oracle see, e.g., Din. *Dem.* 78.

44 *Dem. Meid.* 53, tr. Vince 1935: Τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Ἀθηναίων ὁ τοῦ Διὸς σημαίνει. ὅτι τὰς ὥρας παρηνέγκατε τῆς θυσίας καὶ τῆς θεωρίας, αἵρετοὺς πέμπειν κελεύει θεωροὺς ἔνεκα τούτου διὰ ταχέων, (καὶ) τῷ Διὶ τῷ Ναίῳ τρεῖς βοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἑκάστῳ βοῖ δύο οἷς, τῇ Διώνῃ βοῦν καλλιερεῖν, καὶ τράπεζαν χαλκὴν πρὸς τὸ ἀνάθημα δ' ἀνέθηκεν ὁ δῆμος ὁ Ἀθηναίων. Ὁ τοῦ Διὸς σημαίνει ἐν Δωδώνῃ, Διονύσῳ δημοτελῇ ἱερὰ τελεῖν καὶ κρατῆρα κεράσαι καὶ χοροὺς ἱστάναι, Ἀπόλλωνι ἀποτροπαῖω βοῦν θῆσαι, καὶ στεφανηφορεῖν ἐλευθέρους καὶ δούλους, καὶ ἐλινύειν μίαν ἡμέραν. Δὲ κτησίῳ βοῦν λευκόν.

order to display in the *polis*, or reported in literary sources such as Herodotus and Thucydides. In order to have a corpus of “historical” responses, we use the categorisation by Joseph Fontenrose. He labelled those responses “historical” that had been recorded within a lifetime from their supposed pronouncement at the oracle. Fontenrose’s division of the evidence into “authentic” and “unauthentic” responses of the oracle is debatable – he recognized the problems with this division himself.<sup>45</sup> Still, his choices with respect to (near) contemporaneity can be defended – and for our current purposes his categorization will do as well as any other.<sup>46</sup>

The “historical responses” (H) of Fontenrose are 75 in total and comprise both inscriptions and responses from literary sources. There are just three responses that might be considered riddles: H67 (PW 467 = *IMagn.* 228), H18 (PW 259) and H7 (PW 160). In H67, an inscription, we learn of a woman has been told in a previous oracle to appease Hera, and she subsequently asks which Hera, to which the oracle answers – in Fontenrose’s translation (with a small adaptation) – “Where old age, venerable for its many years, has been wont to bathe its honoured and aged bodies, where unwedded maids dance rhythmically in the chorus to *aulos* accompaniment, at the halls of an effeminate man, worship Hera”.<sup>47</sup> Fontenrose argues this would have been quite clear to the recipients of the response – not so much a riddle as a poetic description.

Certainly ambiguous – but, it has to be said, with hindsight – is H18 (PW 259), where Callistratus appears to have asked whether he would receive the benefit of the laws upon his return to Athens. To which the Pythia replied that he would; and he was put to death after his return as a punishment for earlier crimes. The historicity of this seems, however, quite doubtful; indeed Fontenrose doubts the historicity of both response and story, which is so very reminiscent of the oracle of Croesus when he heard

45 Fontenrose 1978: 7–9.

46 While Fontenrose’s category “Historical” leaves us with 4 % ambiguous responses, his categories “Quasi-historical” and “Legendary” contain 7.4 % (20 out of 268) and 5.7 % (10 out of 176) of ambiguous responses respectively – on a most generous count, considering as a riddle everything not immediately understandable to us. So abandoning Fontenrose’s categorization and looking at *all* recorded Delphic oracular pronouncements (except for Fontenrose’s category of “Fictional”, too small to draw any conclusions from) still leaves us with about the same tiny percentage of ambiguous responses.

47 Fontenrose 1978: 189–190, and 1988: 198–109: Ἐνθα μακροῖσι χρόνοισι σεβάσιμος | εἴθισεν αἰὼν λουτροῖσιν χρῆσθαι τεττημένα σώματα γήρως, οὐ χρόνον | ἰστάσιν κοῦραι θαλάμων ἀμύητοι | εὐρύθμως δοτοῖο πρὸς εὐφθογον | μέλος ἡδὺ, θηλυπρεποῦς φωτὸς | μελάρθοις Ἦραν προσεβάζου. The translation is based on both Fontenrose 1978 and Fontenrose 1988: R24. In fact, this is likely to be a Didymaeon oracle, see Fontenrose 1988: 198–199.

that he would destroy a great empire if he decided to fight the Persians, and which turned out to be his own.<sup>48</sup>

The last example of an apparently enigmatic response is H7 (PW 160) where the Spartans “must bring back the seed of Zeus’s demigod son ... otherwise they will plough with a silver ploughshare”. But this has the looks of a proverbial expression, or maybe we have to take it more or less literally.<sup>49</sup> Otherwise, this is an odd case, in which the Pythia is said to have been bribed in order to give this answer to any Spartan whatever his question – which argues against it being truly enigmatic.

If, despite all misgivings, we accept all three as examples of oracular ambiguity, that leaves 72 responses that are plain and clear.<sup>50</sup> And not only that: some responses even contain a great amount of detail, to the point of indicating, e.g., what type of grotto should be prepared for Bacchus (a “fitting” one). As Fontenrose paraphrases H31 (PW 284):

The Amphichions must complete the work [temple?] quickly so that suppliants may be received in the proper month; they must have this hymn recited to the Hellenes at the yearly Theoxenia and offer sacrifice with supplications of all Hellas. At the quinquennial Pythian festival they must make sacrifice to Bakchos and institute a choral contest, set up an image of Bakchos by the golden lions, and prepare a fitting grotto for him.<sup>51</sup>

Or consider Demosthenes’ report of an oracle from Delphi: there is nothing riddling about this at all (Fontenrose H29; PW 283):

May good fortune attend you. The people of the Athenians make inquiry about the sign which has appeared in the heavens, asking what the Athenians should do, or to what god they should offer sacrifice or make prayer, in order that the issue of the sign may be for their advantage. It will be well for the Athenians with reference to the sign which has appeared in the heavens that they sacrifice with happy auspices to Zeus most high, to Athena most high, to Heracles, to Apollo the deliverer, and that they send due offerings to the Amphiones; that they sacrifice for good fortune to Apollo, god of the ways, to Leto and to Artemis, and that they make the streets

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48 Hdt. 1.53.3.

49 See for one of the passages in which this oracle is reported Thuc. 5.16.2. Fontenrose (1978: 87 n. 62) explains it as “they will have a shortage of food, and will have to buy imported grain with silver”, hesitatingly accepted by Cartledge 2000: 100. This reading goes back to a scholion. Fontenrose first suggests the proverbial nature of the saying as interpreted by the scholiast and then rejects this because it is not in any collection of proverbs. Still, “to plough with silver” = “to buy food for coin”, looks proverbial to us. An alternative reading would be that silver is no good for the fashioning of ploughshares, i.e. all their efforts will remain fruitless; thus Hornblower 1991: 465. If that is what this response says, it is neither proverbial nor enigmatic.

50 A fourth possibly ambiguous text (the third answer to H3 = PW 134; 420) is not mentioned here because it is certainly spurious – Fontenrose doubts its historicity.

51 Diehl 1949: 255.

steam with the savour of sacrifice; that they set forth bowls of wine and institute choruses and wreath themselves with garlands after the custom of their fathers, in honor of all the Olympian gods and goddesses, lifting up the right hand and the left, and that they be mindful to bring gifts of thanksgiving after the custom of their fathers. And ye shall offer sacrificial gifts after the custom of your fathers to the hero-founder after whom ye are named; and for the dead their relatives shall make offerings on the appointed day according to established custom.<sup>52</sup>

Even a question about the death of Plotinus, an occasion which we might easily imagine to have evoked an ambiguous or riddling response (death being a mysterious event inviting mysterious speech), the oracle seems to respond pretty clearly that he has gone to the abodes of the blessed (Fontenrose H69; PW 473).

Thus the evidence from both Delphi and Dodona supports the notion that the daily practice of divination must have been a riddle-free and even unambiguous affair. Keep in mind that our problem is *not* whether the occasion of an individual or *polis* addressing Delphi is historical or not. The problem is only what shape the answer took. When we move beyond Delphi and Dodona, and broaden our view to include the epigraphic record of the Hellenistic and imperial period, for the discussion of which we have no opportunity here, we do not find any riddles, but extremely straightforward oracular pronouncements. One example should suffice: Ivana and Andrej Petrović have put together so-called “metrical sacred regulations” mainly of alleged oracular provenance, which accounts for their metrical form; but being “regulations” (*leges sacrae*) they can hardly be riddles.<sup>53</sup>

It did not escape Fontenrose that all answers in the shape of riddles that we know of are from literary texts only. Recently, Peter Struck took Fontenrose to task: “...Fontenrose’s dismissal of the ambiguity of the Delphic

52 Dem. *Macart.* 66, tr. Murray 1939: Ἀγαθὴ τύχη. ἐπερωτᾷ ὁ δῆμος ὁ Ἀθηναίων περὶ τοῦ σημείου τοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ γενομένου, ὃ τι ἂν δρώσιν Ἀθηναῖοις ἢ ὅτῳ θεῷ θύουσιν ἢ εὐχομένοις εἴη ἐπὶ τὸ ἄμεινον ἀπὸ τοῦ σημείου. συμφέρει Ἀθηναίοις περὶ τοῦ σημείου τοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ γενομένου θύοντας καλλιερεῖν Διὶ ὑπάτῳ, Ἀθηνᾶ ὑπάτῃ, Ἡρακλεῖ, Ἀπόλλωνι σωτῆρι, καὶ ἀποπέμπειν Ἀμφιόνεσσι· περὶ τύχας ἀγαθὰς Ἀπόλλωνι ἀγνιεῖ, Λατοῖ, Ἀρτέμιδι, καὶ τὰς ἀγνιάς κνισῆν, καὶ κρατῆρας ἰστάμεν καὶ χορούς, καὶ στεφαναφορεῖν κατὰ πάτρια· θεοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις καὶ Ὀλυμπίαις πάντεσσι καὶ πάσαις, δεξιάς καὶ ἀριστεράς ἀνίσχοντας, μνασιδωρεῖν κατὰ πάτρια· ἥρω ἀρχαγέτα, οὓ ἐπόνυμοί ἐστε, θύειν καὶ δωροτελεῖν κατὰ πάτρια· τοὺς ἀποφθιμένους ἐν ἱκνουμένα ἡμέρα τελεῖν τοὺς ποθίκοντας κατὰ ἀγνημένα.

53 Petrović and Petrović 2006. They list 26 texts, of which at least 21 are oracular; the large majority is included in *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten* (1998–2004). Note that the metrical nature of these texts has to do with their religious nature, esp. their (alleged) oracular origin. This is what one might call pseudo-orality: these are texts designed (in writing) to look like spoken texts (pronouncements of the oracle).

oracle as nothing but a literary fiction forces him to ignore an important part of the contemporary impact of ancient oracles. Be that as it may, I am operating from the premise that even if only legendary, or quasi-historical, the literary evidence, in inception and reception, is invaluable for gauging what the Greeks *understood* divination to be".<sup>54</sup> We are operating from the premise that Struck's idea that the ambiguity of the oracle – even if only legendary – is invaluable for our understanding of the Greek understanding of divination, is an idea that is misleading about divination. Instead it seems likely that the answers were unambiguous statements, and that everybody knew they were, and expected to receive such answers in seeking oracular assistance themselves.<sup>55</sup> Our premise would be that the re-working of originally unambiguous answers into riddles, or the invention of riddles, in reporting oracular pronouncements in literary sources (or in oral storytelling, which of course we can only hypothesize about on the basis of the written texts), is invaluable for understanding the role of *ambiguous language* in Greek culture. The oracular riddle does not tell us about oracles or divination, but it *does* tell us about riddles and wordplay – or maybe something about oracles after all.

Before we come to that, we should go one step further, leave behind the discussion on the individual sources, and look at the wider picture: is our notion of actual unambiguous oracles in accordance with what we know of the general nature of Greek divination? Although religion, as was said above, seems to invite ambiguity (as, for instance, law invites unambiguous language), there are religious phenomena where clarity is called for. We always should distinguish between different aspects of religious behaviour: ambiguity may be all right in the one situation, but not in the other. In cosmological speculation or singing the praises of the supernatural, ambiguity might be welcomed. But it is obvious that in more direct communication (prayer, cursing) people tend to be quite unambiguous: they want to be heard and understood. Divination belongs in the same sphere – humans ask the supernatural to pronounce about past, present and future in order to point out the right decisions to those who are in doubt before a range of possible options. This can only function properly when answers are *not* ambiguous, but as clear as can be. One did not travel the length of the country to far-away Epirus and pay good money in order to have the oracle at Dodona pronounce something that was a riddle – which

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54 Struck 2003: 172.

55 It did not even cross Croesus' mind, interestingly enough, to return to the famous example from Hdt. 1.55.1–56.1, that the oracle might come up with a riddle or an ambiguity. That is: Herodotus considered the idea of Croesus taking the oracle literally perfectly acceptable – although not very clever (1.90).

would put you in the same situation you started from: you would have to solve the riddle and you might get it wrong. One came all the way to Dodona to make life easier, not more complicated. One wanted to have a clear "yes" or "no" when one has asked whether a marriage or migration or business-trip was a good idea. One wanted to have the name of a god when one has asked what god to sacrifice to in order to restore harmony.<sup>56</sup> The above is common sense.

Common sense, however, does not always do. We might also look at divination in a more structural way – within a model of uncertainty-management.<sup>57</sup> Uncertainty consists of aleatory and epistemic uncertainty. Aleatory uncertainty revolves around the idea that everything is based on chance and the outcome of any occurrence cannot be predicted, while epistemic uncertainty is based on a lack of knowledge ("known unknowns" but also "unknown unknowns").<sup>58</sup> These two types of uncertainty cannot and should not be seen as independent categories: epistemic uncertainty springs from aleatory uncertainty. How they are evaluated in a particular society, however, will be different. In Greek society aleatory uncertainty was deemed prevalent and was accepted in the sense that life was considered a "lottery".<sup>59</sup> Still, Greeks tried to get some certainty about their future by means of asking the supernatural. It is this kind of divinatory certainty that is of interest here. In Greece, the questions that were asked were roughly in the form "If I do this, what will happen" or "Will the consequence of my action be good".<sup>60</sup> From the way these questions were phrased, it appears

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56 Graf 2007: 118–119: "language [of the oracular pronouncement] channels cognition and replaces anxiety with the certainty of hope".

57 Cf. Beerden Forthcoming.

58 Aleatory uncertainty may be based on: inherent randomness of nature (natural randomness); value diversity (cognitive variety); human behaviour (behavioural variety); social, economic, and cultural dynamics (societal randomness); technological surprises (technological randomness). Epistemic uncertainty may be based on inexactness, lack of observations or measurements, practicalities of measurement, conflicting evidence, reducible ignorance (unknown unknowns), indeterminacy (issues that will not be known) and irreducible ignorance (issues that cannot be known); see van Asselt 2000: 86–87.

59 As testified by the popularity of dicing and games more generally – as suggested for the Roman world by Beard 2010. See for literature on Greek gaming, Fisher 2004 and Kurke 1999.

60 There are apparent exceptions, most notably the common questions "will I be happy?", "will I be cured?" or "will I have children?". These might not, however, be true exceptions: possibly they should be re-phrased as asking for the specific conditions under which happiness or procreation will be effected. Cf. Parker 2000: 83: "how long will our good fortune last?" was not a question that asked for a specific number of years or for a date, but for the insurance that things will endure as long as a certain condition is fulfilled. If true exceptions, this still does not affect

that there was no known future which divination could reveal. It is not about prediction, as in astrology. What divination did do was to diminish fears of making the wrong choice which would lead to a negative future. In other words, the primary aim of divination was not to know the future and consequently gain some control over it, but merely to ensure that the future would be positive. Elements of luck and chance were still prevalent in this future, almost to an incomprehensible degree to modern man. Where we live in a society which assumes a level of control with regards to the future, the Greek world was a “fatalistic” one in the sense that nothing could be done by man in order to gain a blueprint of the future and take appropriate actions.<sup>61</sup> It appears obvious that the whole idea of divination, indeed its very nature, is the reduction of uncertainty, and thus fear: the future should be positive, whatever unknown events it may bring. Divination was the most important device that ancient man had at his disposal in order to gain a sense of certainty about the future. Reducing uncertainty and fear as much as possible is not compatible with ambiguity. Considered from a psychological and economic perspective, the outcome of divination should be clear – otherwise, it would not be a practice worth keeping up, and certainly not for many centuries. There was already enough uncertainty in daily life in the ancient world as it was: divination was designed to diminish this. Ambiguity would have increased it.

#### 4. Towards an Explanation

There is, then, a strong case for assuming that the outcome of divination was in the majority of cases completely clear-cut. It is of course possible that in some instances a message may have been ambiguous, but that is not something the usual applicant would have settled for, let alone for a rid-

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our argument, because these are the kind of questions that ask for simple “yes” or “no” answers or for unambiguous advice.

61 See for the contrast between how we deal with the unknown future (by means of risk analysis) and how this contrasts to the premodern era, Giddens 1999: 21–23; Wilkinson 2001: 91–92; Lee 2008: 3–4. Another example: “It is hard to find a place where people use no randomizers. Yet theories of frequency, betting, randomness and probability appear only recently” (Hacking 1975: 2). See for a very interesting and accessible – to non-mathematicians – publication concerned with modern probabilistic thinking, Hacking 1990. Here the mathematics of chance is explained by means of case studies, showing the developments taking place in this respect in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



dle.<sup>62</sup> Then why did the literary notion of ambiguous and even riddling oracles exist in the first place? We have these examples of riddling oracles – which may not have been divinatory practice, but which nevertheless were a popular depiction of the same. Struck and Rosenberger, as we have seen, think this says something about the divinatory process and its perception and reception.<sup>63</sup> We do not think so – or not in so direct a manner. People may have believed the riddling oracles to be historical – in the sense of being authentic; but also in the sense of being of the past, or belonging in a world that was not theirs: they would not expect oracles presenting riddles *to them*. Nevertheless, literary sources indicate there was this particular Greek paradigm embedded into the communal frame of reference, enough so to still shape present-day views of ancient oracles.<sup>64</sup> Herodotus uses the riddle as a literary device throughout his work, as do writers of tragedy.<sup>65</sup> We must assume that a Greek audience considered these riddling oracles as an acceptable way of portraying divination – despite the fact that this turned a practice which, in everybody's real life experience, should be unambiguous into something ambiguous. So we still have to ask how to account for this discrepancy between divinatory practice on the one hand, and literary fiction on the other: why did this paradox exist? Why did the Greeks select some utterly atypical examples of divination, or make up most (or all) of them?

The basis of our explanation lies in the fact that the oracular riddles occur in literary texts only, which all happen to be examples of storytelling. When we look at this from the narrative aspect, it is obvious that a riddle adds drama to a story, helps the story to unfold, prepares us for a tragic outcome.<sup>66</sup> We, as an audience, already know what is going to hap-

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62 The general literature on riddles does not associate riddles with divination; we can only come up with McDowell (1994: 3580), who says: "the one who poses and finally solves the riddle occupies the seer's role". The essence is of course: "and solves the riddle". This compares to the diviner in the Greek world, who observes the ambiguous signs of the supernatural and turns them into an unambiguous message. In riddling, the idea is to make the riddlee sweat for a while, but the riddler will always present the solution.

63 See also Pucci 1996; but for Pucci this is completely an issue of the Greek mind – and not of divinatory *practice* at all.

64 Cf. n. 7 above.

65 For their specific function within the narrative, see, for example, the analysis of Herodotus' use of oracles in the tale of Croesus, by Kindt (2006); or, in unsurpassed detail, Crahay 1956. Intriguing is Pl. *Symp.* 192d who uses *μαντεύομαι* and *αἰνίττομαι* in the same breath, but in what relationship remains unclear.

66 Please note that riddles in a narrative context usually are no longer true riddles to most of the audience: they know the riddle and its solution. It is all about the sto-

pen and that the clue is in the riddle or ambiguity, but the main character is unaware of this and walks into his misfortune. This is both exciting and makes the audience feel superior. In a story, the oracular pronouncement is much enhanced as a narrative element when it is changed from a simple message into a riddle. But the undeniable effectiveness of the riddle as a “literary device” is not a sufficient explanation. Something may be an effective way to tell a story, but still it should be acceptable to an audience – which is, in this particular case, not self-evident, as the narrative ploy stands in complete opposition to actual oracular practice.<sup>67</sup>

The introduction of riddles into stories about oracles was, however, acceptable for a number of reasons. First, the popularity of riddles. In the competitive Greek societies, words were a primary locus of competition: there can be no doubt about the popularity of wordplay in the Greek world.<sup>68</sup> Riddles shared in this popularity: sympotic riddles are particularly well attested – it seems there was no symposium without a fair number of riddles.<sup>69</sup> The contest-riddle was a known form of riddling.<sup>70</sup> So riddling pervaded Greek life on many levels and during many occasions.<sup>71</sup> To introduce this much-loved phenomenon into accounts of oracles is not a huge step. But the love of the Greeks for competition of whatever kind – and wordplay especially – is, although demonstrably strong, not unique.<sup>72</sup>

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ry’s protagonist who does not know how to solve the riddle, and thereby is “beaten” by the story-teller and the audience, who are all “in the know”.

67 An interesting comparison, or even parallel, is the literary image of the gods as wilful, inscrutable, unreliable beings; something one will not encounter in ancient cult where the gods are addressed most respectfully. We cannot discuss this here – see Versnel 2011: 151–237.

68 Luz 2010.

69 Sympotic jokes are many and varied. For the analysis of a particular sympotic joke, and references to where to find sympotic jokes in the sources, see Caponigro 1984. See also Bowie and Kwapisz in this volume.

70 Strabo 14.1.27. Of course the story of Oedipus and the riddle of the Sphinx, an *agon* with words if ever there was one, was part of the mythological baggage of every more-or-less educated Greek: see n. 10 above. On the agonistic element, Ong 1982: 44: “proverbs and riddles are not used simply to store knowledge but to engage others in verbal and intellectual combat”.

71 Orality is important too for how we should appreciate this, see n. 12 above.

72 Why a culture would enjoy telling riddles in the first place, seems to require an answer that lies well beyond the range of the historian, philologists or other humanistic scholar. To use language in ways other than the literal, (relatively) unambiguous statement seems a human universal. Cf. Katz 2009. Huizinga in his famous study *Homo ludens* supposed play, in whatever form, to be an inherent element of human culture. So, all play, word-play included, would be a human trait, or rather: one of those things that make us human. We agree, but in contrast with Huizinga, we would want to see an opposition between the sacred and the lu-

There are many cultures which show a deep attachment to wordplay. The riddle-solver is a common culture hero who has much in common with the trickster.<sup>73</sup> One need only think of Samson in the Old Testament, or of the prophet Daniel: "A notable spirit, with ... the gift of interpreting dreams, explaining riddles and unbinding spells" (Dan. 5:12). Nor did the riddle become part of the perception of divination in every culture with a fondness for riddling.<sup>74</sup> Thus there are no sources indicating Mesopotamians had riddles, or fantasized about riddles, as the outcome of their divinatory process, although they did know the concept of the riddle.<sup>75</sup> As far as African divination is concerned, it appears that the idea that the outcome of divination could take the shape of a riddle is not common there either – even if riddles are very popular in African cultures.<sup>76</sup> So we have to push on.

Secondly, we come to fear, the fear of misinterpretation. The divinatory process was fool-proof, except for the very last stage: you yourself. There was, then, the deep-rooted fear that human weaknesses would spoil everything, because you would not understand what the gods were telling you. The gods do not lie; they cannot lie. But you can be blind. The riddling stories show how the quest for coping with future uncertainties can misfire.

Institutionalisation of the divinatory process may have increased such fears. We have seen above how very "fatalistic" Greek society was.<sup>77</sup> A Greek had to rely on chance and luck – there was no possibility to hide behind the idea that the future could be controlled in any way. Even if divination worked to its maximum potential and a clear answer was given,

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dic, along the lines of Roger Caillois – which would be another argument against the marriage of riddling and oracles: cf. Caillois 1950: Appendix 2 "jeu et sacré".

73 De Vries 1928.

74 See Böck 2011. For examples of a Sumerian riddle collection, see Alster 1976, Civil 1987.

75 This is an *argumentum e silentio*, but considering the huge amount of evidence on Mesopotamian divination, the complete absence of riddling cannot be ignored. The meaning of a sign could, on the other hand, be interpreted – among others – by means we would call wordplay. Yet, this is not the same as the outcome of the divinatory process being a riddle. See for the connection between *protasis* and *apodosis* in the omen texts the recent Bilbija 2008.

76 Take the famous Azande: we are unsure of their general use of riddles, but Evans-Pritchard's account makes it clear that the outcomes of divinations were not in the shape of riddles. See Evans-Pritchard 1937: 258–351.

77 The relation between uncertainty and play is also phrased as "Among the general characteristics of play we reckoned tension and uncertainty. There is always the question: 'will it come off?'" (Huizinga 1938, quoted after the English translation, 1970: 68).

divination was perceived as non-conclusive because the future was not known and could not be known. While in Mesopotamia as a rule one would ask what would happen in the future, a Greek would only ask about the future in some specific instances, while ordinarily he would enquire about what would be best. And who could tell what actually would be best? You yourself maybe: you knew the circumstances from which your question arose. But would you dare to choose a particular direction? Divination has much in common with games of chance. It is an essentially playful way to help one through life's exigencies. With a hint from the supernatural you will be emboldened to carry through with – or to refrain from – your planned course of action. But oracles were institutionalised: it is in this respect that they differed substantially from most other methods of divination. This severely restricts the individual's role in the divinatory process: one poses a question, one receives an answer, but one cannot join in the observation and interpretation of the signs given by the gods. No playing of games any more: you could not change the rules (or move the goal posts) during the game, you got an answer and that was what you had to make do with. But what if you did not understand it?

Stories of misinterpreted oracles are *Warnlegenden*. In the context of the fears raised by divination (which is supposed to allay fears, but, how human, raises new ones), riddles can function didactically: the failure of the stories' protagonists tell one not to rely too much on oneself, not to jump to conclusions. They also sublimate these fears in showing where others – hubristic others – go wrong, and allowing one to feel secure in one's superiority (because you knew the right answer to the riddle all along). As oracles are the most institutionalised form of divination, most bound by rules, fears are stronger there than with other divinatory practices: the *Warnlegenden* about the unsolved riddle (in fact about the failure of the human element within divination) mirror those fears.

## 5. Conclusions

Oracular pronouncements in the Greek world were clear and unambiguous. Otherwise they would not have served their purpose, which was to provide guidance to individuals or communities faced with difficult choices or intractable problems. The non-literary evidence shows as much. The theoretical framework we have offered above, leaves no room for anything else. Still, in ancient literature the riddle was introduced as a theoretical possibility of what could happen during the consultation of an oracle. Oracular language and ambiguity became more or less synonymous across a wide range of literary sources. Why did Greeks find it pleasing and ac-

ceptable to have oracles, which they knew and expected to be unambiguous, to be portrayed as ambiguous?

Essentially, because the riddle makes for a good story. The effectiveness of the riddle as a narrative ploy is evident. But why was it acceptable to deviate so far from actual oracular practice? Because the Greeks were so fond of competition, not least in the form of all kinds of wordplay, riddles included, that the image of a riddling oracle was quite appealing to them – even if they themselves would find this unacceptable in real life. Reporting oracles – but not just oracles, think of the sphinx – becomes an occasion, an excuse for telling (and re-telling) popular riddles. Another reason for riddling oracles is that the stories about the ambiguous outcomes of divination sublimate one of the worst fears of Greek society: the fear of not understanding the divine messages, and making serious mistakes, down to and including self-destruction. Gods cannot lie, but men can: they are cheats and are apt to cheat even themselves. This is truly dramatic when the context is divination, the one occasion where the advice is utterly reliable. The help provided by the gods can be subverted by human failing. The institutionalisation of oracles, which removed the play-element that was present in the "normal" divinatory process, and which allowed one to steer the outcome into a wished-for direction, exacerbated such fears.

Thus oracles came to be seen in a riddling light, even though in real life they were meant to give certainty and reassurance. If something is a popular practice, like riddling, this practice will tend to bleed into story telling and so on, even in situations wherein it is not appropriate. Or where it is appropriate after all in showing people how not to approach divination: self-assured, self-reliant. One had better be humble, listen very carefully and try to come away with a piece of unambiguous advice that helped one to cope with life's exigencies.

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## Were There Hellenistic Riddle Books?\*

Jan Kwapisz

“Dass uns – mit Ausnahme des Poseidipp-Papyrus – keine griechischen *libelli* im Original erhalten sind, mag die nachstehenden Überlegungen auf den ersten Blick müßig erscheinen lassen” – this is how Regina Höschele begins her recent entry into the long “Symposialdichtung oder Buchpoesie” debate about the epigram.<sup>1</sup> This statement is even more appropriate here, i.e. when we enter a narrower and deserted field, in which nothing comparable to the Milan Posidippus papyrus has survived. Our certain evidence for ancient riddle books is late. The collection of Symphosius’ riddles dates back to the end of antiquity. Book 14 of the *Palatine Anthology* – in which mostly anonymous riddles, oracles and mathematical problems have been collected – was compiled by Constantine Cephalas in the tenth century, even if its contents are in part ancient.<sup>2</sup>

In the Classical period the obvious context for riddles was undoubtedly the symposium. We have a relatively abundant amount of evidence to show that riddle-guessing games formed a significant part of typical sympotic contests.<sup>3</sup> There is no reason not to accept Alan Cameron’s suggestion that during the Hellenistic period riddle-guessing was still a popular form of entertainment at symposia.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, however, we should not overlook the symptoms of the cultural change that had begun to take place. In a revealing passage from the work *Paroemiae* on various forms of

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\* I would like to thank the participants of the conference, and in particular Valentina Garulli, for their comments. In writing the sections on Philitas, and especially Simias, I partly drew from the introduction to my edition of the *technopaegnia*, which I am currently preparing for publication in Peeters Hellenistica Groningana series.

1 Höschele 2010: 27.

2 As was shown by Cameron (1993: 135).

3 On “Ainigma und Griphos bei den Gelagen”, see Ohlert 1912: 60–82. On the agonistic character of sympotic entertainment, see Collins 2004: 61–163.

4 Cameron 1995: 81.

riddle games, Clearchus of Soli, a disciple of Aristotle, complains that at symposia his contemporaries prefer unrefined forms of intellectual competition over the more challenging contests of the past (fr. 63 Wehrli).

What I will attempt to show in the present discussion is that even though our evidence for Hellenistic riddle books is extremely scarce, if we look into it carefully enough it will be sufficient to allow us to reach the conclusion that during an age in which book culture was beginning to flourish, riddles not only entered the domain of the book, but also became more important constituents of it than we might have supposed.<sup>5</sup> We will see that at least two highly influential books containing riddling poetic compositions appeared as early as the dawn of the Hellenistic age, among the works of Philitas of Cos and Simias of Rhodes. Before we turn to these, however, we should reach even further back into the past in search of pre-Hellenistic riddle collections. According to a well-known hypothesis, there may have existed an early collection of epigrams ascribed to Simonides which could have predated the first Hellenistic epigram anthologies and, hence, would have been a natural model for their authors and compilers.<sup>6</sup> Could there have existed a similar early riddle collection? An obvious point to begin our investigation is the supposed:

### 1. Collection of Simonidean Riddles

If it could be proven that such a collection ever existed, we might conjecture that it must have played a role similar to that which some scholars assign to the early collection of Simonides' epigrams, whose existence they postulate, i.e. it would have provided an important stimulus to the development of book culture. Three riddles have been attributed to Simonides by ancient sources: the riddle on snow used for cooling wine (fr. 88 *FGE*), quoted by Athenaeus from Callistratus' *Symmeikta* (*FGrH* 348 F 3 ap. Ath. 3.125c), according to whom the poem was extemporised by Simonides at a symposium, and two riddles (fr. 69 and 70 Diehl) which Athenaeus found in Chamaeleon's work *On Simonides* (fr. 34 Wehrli ap. Ath. 10.456c–457a) – one of these is particularly obscure, but according to one of three explanations provided by Athenaeus it was conceived by Simonides so as to mystify a certain event of his life, and the other riddle is accompanied by a similar explanation. Both of the anecdotes serving to explain the riddles, and the riddles themselves, are clearly unauthentic, and some of the editors of the Simonidean corpus did not even bother to in-

5 On Hellenistic book culture, see Bing 1988.

6 See Sider 2007.

clude them in their editions.<sup>7</sup> The riddle on snow and one of the two riddles quoted from Chamaeleon (fr. 70) are referred to by Athenaeus as epigrams, and it was argued, as a consequence, that riddles of this kind were included in Simonides' book of epigrams.<sup>8</sup> If this supposition were correct, there would be no reason, as a matter of fact, to discard the possibility that there was not only a section containing riddles in the book of epigrams attributed to Simonides, but also a separate Simonidean riddle book. Depending on our view of the early history of book culture, we might place the compilation of such a collection either in the Hellenistic age or even earlier.

I argue, however, that all of this must be dismissed. None of the three riddles can be read as a self-contained poem, as each of them makes sense only as part of the anecdotes within which they are preserved and which provide solutions for them. The only purpose of the three poems is to show their alleged author's ingenuity in cryptically describing a particular situation in his life. They cannot form a part of an anthology of γρίφοι or παίγνια (this is how Hauvette refers to them), since they are bound inseparably to Simonides' *vita* and lose their *raison d'être* outside of it. Even if it is uncertain whether there is a connection to Simonides' *vita* in the case of Athenaeus' riddle with three solutions (only one of which depends on an event from the poet's life; this is fr. 69 Diehl), this only shows how obscure riddles of this kind become when the source in which they are preserved lacks an accurate commentary. Moreover, Athenaeus says that the three riddles are of an improvisational origin and, in accordance with this statement, he introduces them without a conventional formula that would indicate that they might form part of a poetry book (e.g. 10.412d ὡς Ποσειδῖππος φησιν ἐν Ἐπιγράμμασι or 11.472f Ἡδύλος Ἐπιγράμμασι; cf. also e.g. Stob. 1.8.22 Σιμωνίδου Ἐπιγραμμάτων).<sup>9</sup>

Although there is no evidence that the three Simonidean riddles ever found their way into a book of Αἰνίγματα, Γρίφοι or even into a section of the Ἐπιγράμματα, it is no waste of time for us to focus our attention on such books for just a moment. Once the biographical tradition of a poet-riddler is well-developed and the pseudepigraphic poetry which accompanies it becomes abundant, we are certainly not far from the moment when the generically distinctive production attributed to such a poet in scattered sources might become material for an anthology. But above all, knowing that a formula such as Σιμωνίδης ἐν Αἰνίγμασιν / Σιμωνίδου Αἰνιγμάτων would provide important evidence for the existence of a collection of Si-

7 They are not included in Page's *FGE* or in Campbell 1991.

8 Hauvette 1896: 18, now with Sider 2007: 117.

9 On such formulae as evidence for the existence of an epigram book, see Gutzwiller 1998: 16–20.

monidean riddles, we can concentrate our efforts on the search for a similar formula applied to another poet.

## 2. Book of Riddles Attributed to Cleobulina

This concept becomes almost tangible when we consider the formula Κλεοβουλίνη ἐν τοῖς Αἰνίγμασιν at Ath. 10.448b. It is hardly a new idea that the Hellenistic age, at the latest, saw the formation of a book of riddles attributed to Cleobulina, a legendary poetess whose reputation as a riddler is underscored in all of the testimonies which have reached us.<sup>10</sup> Cleobulus of Lindus, her father and one of the Seven Sages, has been credited by Diog. Laert. 1.89 with ἄσματα καὶ γρίφοι εἰς ἔπη τριχίλια; this information was most likely retrieved by Diogenes Laertius from a fragment of the work Περὶ ποιητῶν by Lobo of Argos (Lobo, fr. 6 Garulli) – the date of Lobo’s work is difficult to determine, but apparent points of contact with the tradition of Peripatetic biography, recently underscored by Valentina Garulli, seem to be telling.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, Lobo’s reputation as a *Schwindler*, only recently questioned by Garulli, does not permit us to use the stichometric data he provided as conclusive proof that a book of Cleobulus’ poetry was known in Lobo’s time,<sup>12</sup> but this possibility deserves at least a mention. In addition, Otto Jahn attractively suggested that ἄσματα in the text of Diogenes Laertius is a corruption of αἰνίγματα.<sup>13</sup> If Jahn’s conjecture is accepted and if Lobo was not, after all, a *Schwindler*, this leaves Cleobulus with a riddle book known in the Hellenistic period.

With regard to Cleobulina, there may have been a separate riddle book bearing her name in the time of Diogenes Laertius (or his source), according to whom she is αἰνιγμάτων ἐξαμέτρων ποιήτρια. One of well-known traditional riddles, however, the “riddle of the year”, is attributed to her only by the *Suda* (s.v. Κλεοβουλίνη), while other sources (Diog. Laert. 1.91, Stob. 1.8.37 and *Anth. Pal.* 14.101) give it to her father: some have

10 See Konstantakos 2005: 16. The fragments have been conveniently collected by Matelli (1997), which can also be consulted for a summary of the debate on whether Cleobulina was a historical figure.

11 Garulli 2004: 153–162.

12 3,000, the number which Lobo gives us, is the number corresponding to the standard figures for the length of Hellenistic book rolls; this would fill either two or three rolls of average size. On the size of Hellenistic book rolls, see Van Sickle 1980.

13 Jahn 1869: 4; cf. Garulli 2004: 62, who observes that *scripsit autem de enigmaticis questionibus libros trium milium carminum* in the so-called Pseudo-Burley, a paraphrase of Diogenes Laertius, seems to support Jahn’s conjecture.

suggested that this confusion may be due to the fact that the section containing Cleobulina's riddles was included in Cleobulus' book.<sup>14</sup> However, the fact that Athenaeus (in the passage already quoted) speaks of Cleobulina's riddles, which are discussed at length by an otherwise unknown Diotimus of Olympe, strongly indicates that at some point Cleobulina's corpus had formed an autonomous book. Before we can try to answer the question of *when* the riddles were gathered in one book under the name of Cleobulina, it would be beneficial to have a closer look at what has reached us of this corpus.

All three riddles ascribed by our sources solely to Cleobulina are highly conventional, in which they resemble the "riddle of the year".<sup>15</sup> Two of them (Cleobulin. fr. 1 and 2 West) begin with ἄνδρ' εἶδον and hence belong to the "I saw a man..." class of riddles, which we may alternatively label "what did I see" riddles. They are widely documented in Indo-European traditions – Martin West adduces parallels from the Vedic, Old English and Slavonic sources (Athenaeus himself, who quotes fr. 1 at 10.452b, attests that "many riddles are of this type").<sup>16</sup> The third riddle is different (fr. 3 West):

κνήμη νεκρὸς ὄνος με κερασφόρῳ οὐκ ἔκρουσεν.

A dead ass boxed my ear with his horned shin-bone.<sup>17</sup>

As is explained by Plutarch, to whom we owe this verse (*Conv. sept. sap. 5* = *Mor. 150e–f*), the reference is to a Phrygian flute made of a donkey's bone. Together with the Simonidean riddle on snow used to cool wine, this riddle belongs to what Timothy Power calls "a distinctive tradition of sympotic poetry that aims exactly at mystifying the equipment and practices of the symposium", a tradition well evidenced in Greek literature.<sup>18</sup> The traditionality of these three riddles – already evident to the ancients because the author of *Δισσοὶ λόγοι* (90 Diels-Kranz) introduces fr. 2 as ποιημάτων παλαιότερων μαρτύριον – tells us something about the contents of Cleobulina's collection. It was, I believe, a convenient ἀποθήκη for grouping under one heading traditional riddles connected by similar themes or structure. Fr. 1, attributed to Cleobulina by Plut. *Conv. sept. sap. 10* = *Mor. 154b* (or to Eumetis, as Plutarch calls her), is quoted without ascription in several sources, including the earliest, i.e. Aristotle (*Rh. 3.1405a34–b4, Poet. 1458a23–30*), which suggests that it was perceived first of all not as a

14 Konstantakos 2005: 16.

15 On Indo-European "year riddles", see West 2007: 370–372.

16 West 2007: 366–367.

17 Tr. Edmonds 1932.

18 Power 2007: 201, who discusses riddles on musical instruments in this context. Cf. Martin 2001: 63.

product of Cleobulina's ingenuity, but as a traditional riddle whose authorship was not worth mentioning.

The absence of ascription from the quotations in Aristotle might be taken to indicate that riddles had not yet been gathered under the name of Cleobulina in his time, but rather found their way into such a compilation later. On the other hand, the anonymous author of *Δισσοὶ λόγοι* (usually dated to the fourth century<sup>19</sup>) assigns fr. 2 explicitly to Cleobulina, and an even earlier interest in this legendary figure is evidenced by Cratinus' comedy *Κλεοβουλῖναι*.<sup>20</sup> An early compilation of Cleobulina's riddles is certainly more conceivable in the light of her apparent popularity, though no firm conclusion can be reached. However, what we can safely assume is that the Alexandrians either knew the anthology of riddles bearing the name of Cleobulina or (as Wilamowitz thought) they produced such a compilation themselves. Even if the riddles attributed to Cleobulina had not yet been brought together at the dawn of the Hellenistic age in the book later known to Athenaeus, the very fact that traditional riddles were attributed to her implies that their generic distinctiveness must have already been felt at that period. This preliminary reflection on the distinctive character of such material might have inspired Hellenistic riddle collections. That this assumption is correct is confirmed by the fact that we find an allusion to Cleobulina, fr. 3 in one of the riddling compositions by Philitas. Before we come to Philitas, however, a word needs to be said about the fourth-century collection of riddles and wordplays whose existence cannot be doubted:

### 3. Clearchus of Soli's Treatise *On Riddles*

The Peripatetic philosopher Clearchus was apparently a contemporary of Philitas, to whom our attention will soon turn – they both stand with one foot in the fourth century and the other in the third.<sup>21</sup> Clearchus' *Περὶ γρίφων*, several excerpts of which have been preserved for us mainly in Athenaeus (fr. 84–95 Wehrli), was above all a theoretical study in which a definition of the riddle was proposed and various types of riddles and wordplays were discussed.<sup>22</sup> But the importance of such a work for book

19 On the date of *Δισσοὶ λόγοι*, see Matelli 1997: 17.

20 Wilamowitz (1899: 219–222) suggested that Cleobulina had been a wholly fictitious creation of Cratinus.

21 On the date of Clearchus, see Wehrli 1948: 45, and on Philitas, see Sbardella 2000: 7–14.

22 On the contents of Clearchus' work, see Guichard 2010.

culture may lie in the fact that it contained a rich selection of material that was not easily accessible otherwise,<sup>23</sup> not unlike such major poetic anthologies as Meleager's *Garland*. At 10.448b–c, Athenaeus appears to distinguish the definition of the riddle emerging from Cleobulina's αἰνίγματα from the definition proposed by Clearchus.<sup>24</sup> Also, from our point of view, Clearchus' approach to the riddle is innovative in comparison with what Cleobulina's collection had to offer since he extended the definition of the riddle to include various forms of wordplays and even metrical experiments.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the most striking example is the *Hymn to Pan* by Clearchus' compatriot Castorion (Clearch. fr. 88 Wehrli = *SH* 310), a metrical *tour de force* which is not otherwise riddling. The poem is composed of iambic trimeters in which the end of each *metron* coincides with the end of a word, so that the *metra* can be freely rearranged (at least in theory).<sup>26</sup> In addition, each *metron* consists of eleven letters. Though strictly speaking not a riddle book, Clearchus' cabinet of curiosities must have been frequently visited by poet-experimentalists searching for inspiration, and therefore needs to be mentioned here.

No trace, knowledge of or influence by Clearchus is discernible in:

#### 4. Philitas' Παίγνια

Nonetheless, it is the pitiful remnants of this book to which we now turn. Of the two collections of riddling poetry contemporary with Clearchus of which we are able to catch a glimpse – i.e. the collections of Philitas and Simias – this one can be seen somewhat more clearly. Therefore, its famous author deserves our special attention. Philitas of Cos had the highest reputation as ποιητής ἄμα καὶ κριτικός (Strab. 14.2.19 = test. 3 Lightfoot).<sup>27</sup> He was the teacher of Ptolemy II and of the grammarian Zenodotus of Ephesus (test. 1 and 11 Lightfoot), and the impressive list of those who were touched by his influence includes Callimachus, Theocritus and Posidippus, all of whom pay some kind of tribute to him in their poetry, each

23 In the field of the epigram the third-century Neoptolemus of Parium's *Περὶ ἐπιγραμμάτων* could perhaps provide an interesting parallel, if we had more of it than just a title (Ath. 10.454f).

24 The text is uncertain here; I think that Casaubon's supplement is necessary: ἄλλ' ἡμεῖς ζητήσωμεν πρότερον μὲν τίς ὁ ὅρος τοῦ γρίφου, τίνα δὲ Κλεοβουλίνη ἢ Δινδία προὔβαλλεν (οὐ ζητήσωμεν), ἱκανῶς γὰρ εἶρηκε περὶ αὐτῶν ὁ ἑταῖρος ἡμῶν Διότιμος ὁ Ὀλυμπηγός.

25 See Luz 2010: 139–146.

26 On the properties of the poem, see Bing 1985.

27 For the introduction to Philitas as a *poeta doctus*, see Bing 2009: 11–32.



in his own way (see test. 5, 8 and 17 Lightfoot). In the obscure passage from the prologue to the *Aetia* (fr. 1.9–12 Massimilla), if we can trust the Florentine scholia, the Callimachean narrator says that Philitas' short poems are better than the long ones, and in Theoc. *Id.* 7.39–41 Philitas is praised for his subtlety (as a “cicada”) alongside the epigrammatist Asclepiades – since Philitas was, *inter alia*, an epigrammatist just like Asclepiades, perhaps again his mastery of the short form is being alluded to. The poets of the generation after Philitas may have given special attention to his short poems.

In the *lemmata* accompanying the three Philitean fragments quoted by Stobaeus (fr. 6–8 Lightfoot), two titles are attested for books of Philitas' short compositions – Ἐπιγράμματα and Παίγνια (Stobaeus' conventional formula, with which we are already familiar, is Φιλήτα Ἐπιγραμμάτων/Παιγνίων). Although παίγνιον is by no means a precise generic term, and we find it applied to various poetic and even prose compositions, the verb παίζειν often refers to sympotic entertainment and, specifically, to poetic performances at symposia (this is still valid for Hellenistic poetry; see Hedyll. 5.3–4 and 6.3–4 Gow-Page); it has been suggested that Philitas' Παίγνια “erano concepiti come una raccolta di carmi la cui destinazione, reale o fittizia che fosse, si identificava appunto con l'occasione simposiale”.<sup>28</sup> Livio Sbardella's diagnosis is due to the riddling character of the only poem which can be assigned with certainty to the book of Παίγνια, i.e. fr. 8 Lightfoot:

οὐ μέ τις ἐξ ὄρέων ἀποφώλιος ἀγροιώτης  
αἰρήσει κλήθρην, αἰρόμενος μακέλην·  
ἀλλ' ἐπέων εἰδὼς κόσμον καὶ πολλὰ μογήσας,  
μύθων παντοίων οἶμον ἐπιστάμενος.

No lumbering rustic from the mountains shall bear me, snatching up a hoe – me, an alder tree; but one who knows the marshalling of words, who toils, who knows the pathways of all forms of speech.<sup>29</sup>

This riddle belongs, or at least appears to belong, to a category well attested among not only Greek, but also Indo-European cultures, to which we may refer as “who am I” riddles.<sup>30</sup> What is the κλήθρη to which this poem refers, this alder tree that may be carried off only by a man who possesses mastery, not over the hoe, but over words? Many solutions have been proposed,<sup>31</sup> but in my opinion it is Giovanni Cerri's recent discussion of this poem which, in accordance with its title, contains “soluzione di un enig-

28 Sbardella 2000: 51; cf. Reitzenstein 1893: 87–89.

29 Tr. Lightfoot 2009, slightly adapted.

30 On this category, see West 2007: 367.

31 See Sbardella 2000: 127–131.

ma".<sup>32</sup> Κλήθρη can be properly identified only after it is noticed that, although this word must have been commonly used in prose, in poetry its appearances are limited to the poem by Philitas himself above, and to the *Odyssey*, in which the word is δῖς εἰρημένον.<sup>33</sup> The alder of the poets is endemic to Calypso's island, because both occurrences in the *Odyssey* are found in book 5 (64 and 239); this is one of the trees used by Odysseus to build a raft. That the Alexandrian philologists did not overlook the rarity of κλήθρη in poetry is confirmed by how Philitas alludes to it. Κλήθρη in his poem is a tree from Calypso's island, one of those cut down not by an ordinary woodcutter, but by the famous Odysseus himself. All of the phrases employed by Philitas to describe the remarkable alder-slayer match, as Cerri shows, those applied to Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. It is Odysseus who is, according to Calypso, οὐκ ἀποφώλια εἰδώς, ἰοῖον δὲ τὸν μῦθον ἐπεφράσθης ἀγορεύσαι (5.182–183). Alcinous also praises Odysseus' verbal dexterity: σοὶ δ' ἔπι μὲν μορφὴ ἐπέων, ἔνι δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί, ἰ μῦθον δ' ὥς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας (11.367–368). Both passages are echoed in Philitas' poem, and πολλὰ μογήσας is an even clearer allusion to the *Odyssey*, in which, as Cerri notes, it is used formulaically of Odysseus.

Although Philitas' riddle, apparently encouraging its readers to guess what hides behind the first-person pronoun in line 1, might be at first regarded as wholly conventional, it turns out at the end that things are not that simple. Once κλήθρη is identified by a well-read reader as a building material for the famous raft, this is only the key to understanding that the riddle is not about the alder but about Odysseus – and not just Odysseus; in fact, Cerri rightly detects a second and even third cryptic layer in the poem, pointing out that the one "who knows the pathways of all forms of speech" is also Homer, who is able to introduce into the domain of poetry a word normally regarded as unpoetic. But apart from Odysseus and Homer, Philitas himself too "knows the pathways of all forms of speech", with his capability of discovering in Homer and aptly reusing an unpoetic δῖς εἰρημένον in an ingenious poetic game. Fr. 8 is an elaborate product of Philitas' erudition mixed with poetic skills which needs to be reread several times to be fully appreciated (and therefore implies a reading, rather than oral, audience<sup>34</sup>).

32 Cerri 2005.

33 Philitas' allusion to Homer was also noticed by Garriga (1989) and Sier (2001).

34 For a distinction between the learned, complex allusion in Hellenistic poetry addressed to a reading audience and the earlier oral allusion, the construction of which facilitates its decoding, see Bing 2009: 147–174.

All of this certainly tells us much about the book of which fr. 8 was a part, but we are still unable to determine whether this book was generically homogeneous and consisted of similarly learned *παίγνια* or whether the κλήθρη-riddle was accompanied in it by poems of various genres, for instance by epigrams. Fr. 7 Lightfoot, as it is preserved in Stob. 4.56.10–11, may shed light on this problem:

“ἐκ θυμοῦ κλαῦσαί με τὰ μέτρια, καί τι προσηνὲς  
εἰπεῖν, μεμνήσθαι τ’ οὐκέτ’ ἐόντος ὁμῶς”.  
οὐ κλαίω ξείνων σε φιλαίτατε· πολλὰ γὰρ ἔγνωσ  
καλά, κακῶν δ’ αὖ σοι μοῖραν ἔνειμε θεός.

“Mourn me sincerely, but in reason; speak a kind word; and remember one who is no more”. I do not mourn you, dearest stranger; you enjoyed much blessing, though god gave you, too, a share of pain.<sup>35</sup>

The unity of both couplets in this epigram is easily perceived, but they are separated by Stobaeus so that the first of them is introduced by the lemma Φιλήτα Παιγνίων and the other one by Φιλέα [sic] Ἐπιγραμμάτων. To explain this confusion, Kathryn Gutzwiller suggested that “[q]uite probably, *Paignia* was the general title for a miscellaneous collection which included short elegiac poems that could be descriptively called ἐπιγράμματα”.<sup>36</sup> But Gutzwiller’s theory still does not explain why the first distich is classified as a *παίγνιον* and the second as an epigram, and I have my own explanation to offer. First, we need to understand how the poem was divided into two. It has to be assumed that in the poetry book in which Stobaeus, or rather Stobaeus’ source, found the poem under discussion, the end of each poem was marked by a horizontal stroke in the left margin, i.e. a *paragraphus*.<sup>37</sup> But another function of the *paragraphus* is to mark a change of speakers. I suggest that such a “dramatic” *paragraphus* was at some point added confusingly to mark that the poem is a dialogue between the deceased and the passer-by. This *paragraphus* was later mistaken, perhaps by Stobaeus’ source, for the *paragraphus* marking the end of the poem. At the point when each of the couplets had received the lemma Φιλήτα, but were no longer part of Philitas’ book, their origin became a matter of conjecture. That the second couplet came to be assigned to the book of epigrams is not surprising, but why not the first? Is the epigrammatic character of both couplets, and of the whole poem, not clear enough? My suggestion is that someone familiar with Philitas’ reputation of being a

35 Tr. Lightfoot 2009.

36 Gutzwiller 1998: 17.

37 This is standard scribal practice; the Milan epigram collection attributed to Posidippus (*P. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309) provides a convenient example. See Johnson 1994: 65.

riddler may have been misled by the form of the first couplet. First-person speech is, of course, an extremely common feature of the epigram, but this is what epigrams share with many riddles. Moreover, many epigrams are, in a way, enigmatic – they often hide from the reader the details he or she is encouraged to supplement, so that they involve the reader in what Peter Bing refers to as *Ergänzungsspiel*.<sup>38</sup> Philitas' epigram is particularly sparing of details – we are given no hint as to the identity of the speaker in the first couplet or why he died, and where the tomb might be. If I am correct in supposing that the distich was mistaken for a riddle, the implication would be that the one who made this mistake knew that Philitas' Παίγνια was a riddle book, separate from his Ἐπιγράμματα.

One more riddling fragment was assigned to Philitas' Παίγνια by Reitzenstein.<sup>39</sup> Fr. 15 Lightfoot is cited by Ath. 2.71a and Antig. Car. *Hist. mir.* 8:

γηρύσαιτο δὲ νεβρὸς ἀπὸ ψυχὴν ὀλέσασσα,  
ὀξεῖης κάκτου τύμμα φυλαξαμένη.

Let the voice be heard of the fawn that has lost its life, one that has fled the cactus' sharp sting.<sup>40</sup>

Antigonus explains that fawn bones are used to manufacture *auloi*, but become useless when the fawn is wounded by a “cactus”, a Sicilian thorn. Philitas' cryptic description of the *aulos* should seem familiar to us – it was suggested by Reitzenstein that Philitas reuses here the old riddle which we have already seen among the fragments ascribed to Cleobulina (fr. 3 West ap. Plut. *Conv. sept. sap.* 5 = *Mor.* 150e). The resemblance is obvious. In the light of what we know about the Hellenistic, and more specifically Philitean, taste for witty allusions, I am inclined to think that the echo of Cleobulina's verse is deliberate. In Plutarch's account of the banquet of the Seven Sages, Cleobulina's riddle is put in the mouth of Aesop, who adduces it to confirm his statement that in his time the manufacturers of *auloi* used in their work donkey bones instead of fawn bones. Perhaps a similar frame for Cleobulina's riddle was known to Philitas, and I like to think that Philitas' riddle, which in its sophistication improves on its model, was designed as a sort of humorous polemic against Cleobulina's view on the manufacturing of *auloi*. Even if Philitas' couplet purports to belong to the rich tradition of the sympotic riddle (and this is how Reitzenstein preferred to view it), its allusiveness suggests that it should be imagined to form a part, alongside fr. 8, of a collection of learned poems composed for reading and rereading.

38 Bing 2009: 85–105.

39 Reitzenstein 1893: 179–180; cf. Sbardella 2000: 146–147.

40 Tr. Lightfoot 2009.

The main difficulty with placing fr. 15 in the book of Παίγνια is that this is not, apparently, a poem complete in itself – δέ in the first line implies that the riddling distich is part of a larger whole, as the particle never, as far as I am aware, begins an epigram. But is this really δέ? In my opinion the couplet as we have it is defective – the optative is puzzling and the repetition of the aorist participle seems to me poorly justified. The passage is greatly improved, I think, if we replace δέ with κε: γηρύσαιτό κε νεβρός κτλ. The potential optative would nicely fit with φυλαξαμένη, which should now be interpreted as a conditional participle: “The fawn can sing after it lost its life provided it avoided the cactus”. What we get in this way is a complete, self-contained whole.

Of course, all of this is still very little to build on, but if we agree that Παίγνια was a book separate from Ἐπιγράμματα, we can make an informed conjecture about its content. The book of Παίγνια may have at first seemed to be a traditional riddle collection, similar to that ascribed to Cleobulina, with which it had points in common. But on closer inspection an innovative design could have been perceived. Philitas not only alluded to, but also developed the tradition of sympotic riddle-games, putting the emphasis, as both fr. 8 and 15 attest, on those testing literary erudition (on such games at symposia, see Clearch. fr. 63 Wehrli), e.g. familiarity with Homer or with the traditional repertoire of riddle types. By transferring this tradition onto a papyrus scroll, Philitas casts the reader into the role of a participant in the sophisticated game of erudition and wit. Although it is impossible, in view of the scarcity of our material, to determine the precise extent of Philitas’ influence on the poets of the generation after him, such as Callimachus and Theocritus, the concept of literature emerging from his Παίγνια, perhaps clearer here than anywhere else, must have appeared attractive to later poets, and traces of this fascination are not difficult to find in Hellenistic poetics.<sup>41</sup> In fact, the importance of fr. 8, and of Philitas’ poetry in general, for shaping Hellenistic tastes has been already noted: in particular, it is Philitas’ concept of the poet whose creation is the result of painstaking toil that attracted many followers.<sup>42</sup> It is remarkable, however, how innovative Philitas seems to be in his preoccupation with song, voice and poetry itself, which is now recognised as typically Hellenistic.

Philitas’ importance cannot be overstated, but I find it rewarding to view him not alone but in a pair with his less famous and largely neglected twin brother – Simias of Rhodes. Simias is Philitas’ contemporary, a poet of the generation preceding what we usually view as the Golden Age of

41 One may note a possible reminiscence of Philitas’ fr. 8 Lightfoot in Ov. *Met.* 1.512–522; see Durbec 2007.

42 See Cerri 2005: 139; cf. e.g. Sbardella 2000: 67–71.

Hellenistic poetry.<sup>43</sup> Like Philitas, Simias was ποιητὴς ἅμα καὶ κριτικός – as a poet he was the author of both longer poems and epigrams, and as a grammarian he authored Γλῶσσαι, again walking hand in hand with Philitas. They even both came from the same part of Greece – the Dodecanese.<sup>44</sup> I would like to suggest here that Philitas’ book of Παίγνια also had a counterpart in Simias’ poetry. This was, I argue:

## 5. Simias’ Book of Polymetric Poems

The main innovative trend in the field of Hellenistic metrics is characterised by Martin West in the following way:

In the Hellenistic period, especially during the third century, many book-poets experiment with verse-forms derived from archaic monody. They were not in general concerned to write pseudo-song, either strophic or astrophic, but rather to widen the repertory of stichic and distichic metres available for literary purposes.<sup>45</sup>

Prominent examples include Theocritus’ Aeolic poems (*Id.* 28–30), the *Hymn to Demeter*, composed in catalectic choriambic hexameters by Philicus of Corcyra, Callimachus’ contemporary (*SH* 676–680),<sup>46</sup> and Sotades of Maroneia’s attempt to rewrite the *Iliad* in the Ionic metre known as sotadean (fr. 4a–c Powell). But this trend is, in fact, foreshadowed by the poetry of Simias. Hephaestio preserves for us six incipits of Simias’ poems in diverse metres, in all of which he apparently aimed to “invent” a new stichic metre. These are:

(1) two pairs of cretic tetrameters (fr. 9–10 Fränkel = 13–14 Powell)

(2) a single line in the metre which is a variation on the previous one, but in which the first three cretics are completely resolved and the fourth is resolved into a fourth paeon. Additionally, as Hermann Fränkel observed,<sup>47</sup> unless it is by accident, the first word in the first *metron* is monosyllabic, in the second *metron* it is dissyllabic, in the third it is trisyllabic, and a four-syllable word fills the fourth *metron* (fr. 11 Fränkel = 15 Powell): Σέ ποτε Διὸς ἀνὰ πύματα νεαρὲ κόρε νεβροχίτων. I suggest that when he was composing this poem, Simias may have had in mind the Homeric “rhopalic”

43 On the date of Simias, see Fränkel 1915: 10–11. For a recent discussion of Simias’ epigrams, see Sistakou 2007.

44 The scholiast on Theocritus (Philit. test. 2b–c Lightfoot) tells us that according to some, Philitas was a Rhodian, again like Simias, and although Philitas’ connection with Cos is clear and strong, perhaps we could assume that he was a Rhodian by birth and moved to Cos only later to spend his life there.

45 West 1982: 149; cf. Hunter 1996: 4–5.

46 On Philicus, see Fantuzzi 2007.

47 Fränkel 1915: 48.

verse, in which, as the ancient grammarians noticed, each word is a syllable longer than the preceding word (*Il.* 3.182): ὦ μάκαρ Ἀτρείδῃ μοιρηγενὲς ὀλβιόδαιμον.<sup>48</sup>

(3) a single choriambic line, interpreted by West as *hi*<sup>2c</sup> (fr. 12 Fränkel = 16 Powell)<sup>49</sup>

(4) a catalectic anapaestic trimeter (fr. 13 Fränkel = 9 Powell)

(5) a catalectic dactylic pentameter (fr. 14 Fränkel = 17 Powell).<sup>50</sup>

Such inventions may seem rather lightweight to us, but the poets (and most likely their readers as well) treated them very seriously as important innovations.<sup>51</sup> In one of the fragments of the *Hymn to Demeter*, Philicus, convinced of the novelty of his design, gives expression to his pride (*SH* 677):

καινογράφου συνθέσεως τῆς Φιλίκου, γραμματικοί, δῶρα φέρω πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

Men of letters, I bring you a gift of Philikos' newly-written composition.<sup>52</sup>

Something similar is found in the fragment of Boiscus of Cyzicus, who would seem to be another contemporary of Callimachus (*SH* 233). Boiscus, whose invention is a distichic metre consisting of iambic tetrameters, of which the second is catalectic, introduces himself as καινοῦ γραφεὺς ποιήματος.

Of course the poems to which these fragments belonged are not, strictly speaking, riddles, but I argue that they should all be viewed as a type of *παίγνια*. Unfortunately, no book title is attested for Simias. However, I would like to suggest that Simias' poems in various metres may have originally been either part of a separate section of his poetry book or of his book devoted exclusively to such experiments. When they were collected together, the reader was encouraged to explore the metrical variety and formal mastery of the compilation. If Fränkel's suggestion about fr. 11, as quoted above, is correct, there was much to discover there. This poem in a newly invented metre, in which words of one, two, three and four syllables filled at least the opening line, can surely be included in the broadened definition of *γρίφος* as proposed by Clearchus: it does not seem to be far from Castorion's *Hymn to Pan*. Moreover, it is possible that at least some of Simias' poems in various metres did actually contain riddles. Wila-

48 See *schol. ad loc.* and cf. Levitan 1985: 247.

49 West 1982: 151.

50 This is marked as "dubium" by Fränkel (1915: 50) – although Hephaestio introduces it as Σιμίου, he cites it without ascription – but the metrical form of this line and the occurrence of a Doric form in it makes the attribution to Simias highly plausible.

51 Cf. Bing 1988: 22–23.

52 Tr. Bing 2009: 109.

mowitz thought that the poem beginning with the line τὸν στυγνὸν Μελανίππου φόνον αἱ πατροφόνων ἔριθοι (fr. 12 Fränkel, quoted above) “war ein Rätselgedicht wie die Alexandra des Lykophron, Tydeus ist kenntlich ... Vielleicht waren die Erinyen gemeint”.<sup>53</sup>

Apart from the meagre fragments which we owe to Hephaestio, we know very well the three other metrical experiments by Simias that might have belonged, I argue, to the same collection, and therefore can tell us much about it. These are the so-called *technopaegnia*, or pattern poems, i.e. the *Axe*, the *Wings of Eros* and the *Egg*. These are preserved, alongside three other *carmina figurata*, in the manuscript of the *Palatine Anthology* and in the bucolic manuscripts of Theocritus.<sup>54</sup> The remaining three pattern poems include the *Syrinx* attributed to Theocritus, but perhaps somewhat later, and the two *Altars*, both of which were probably composed, in my opinion, in the Roman times. The ancient compiler of the collection of pattern poetry is likely to have found Simias’ *technopaegnia* in his poetry book. Because of the peculiar metrical form of these poems, my suggestion is that this was the same book of Simias’ polymetric poems with which we are already familiar.

Unlike the *Syrinx* and one of the *Altars*, Simias’ *technopaegnia* are not *Rätselgedichte*. It is clear that Simias’ preoccupation is with metre rather than with the visual form; there are good reasons to think that his *technopaegnia* were originally conceived as, to use Christine Luz’s expression which she applies to Castorion’s *Hymn to Pan*,<sup>55</sup> γρίφοι ἐν μέτρῳ, similar to Simias’ other polymetric poems. This preoccupation with metre is particularly evident in the *Egg*. The poem is amazingly self-referential as far as its metrical pattern is concerned; it describes how the number of *metra* in each consecutive pair of its lines increases from one to ten (lines 9–10). The metrical complexity of the *Egg* – perhaps alluded to by the expression ἄτριον νέον, “a new weft”, at line 3 – is also remarkable: according to Martin West, this is “the most complex product (metrically) of all Hellenistic book-poetry”.<sup>56</sup> Yet the *Wings* and the *Axe* can be also included in the same category of metrical experiments. As a matter of fact, Simias’ concern in these poems is not so much with their shape as with showing how the shape can be manipulated by means of expanding/compressing the choriambic base.<sup>57</sup> Note that the same metre is later reused, in a more tradi-

53 Wilamowitz 1914: 102 n. 1.

54 For a discussion of the six *technopaegnia*, see Luz 2010: 327–353 and my forthcoming edition of these poems.

55 Luz 2010: 143.

56 West 1982: 151.

57 Cf. Danielewicz 1996: 48.



tional manner, by Philicus in his *Hymn to Demeter*. In this composition, it is used as a stichic metre similar to the innovative forms which Hephaestio quotes from Simias' polymetric poems.

Although I emphasise the unity of all of Simias' poems in uncommon metres, it is clear that, on the one hand, the *Egg* belongs to a different category than the *Axe* and the *Wings*, and on the other, the three *technopaegnia* are in several respects unlike the poems known from Hephaestio's quotations. This leads me to an extremely tentative suggestion about the place of the *technopaegnia* in the postulated book and about the form of this book. The *Egg* not only chats about itself with its reader, but it also contains a reference to its author: the poem introduces itself as ἄρτιον νέον Δωρίας ἀηδόνοϋ (lines 3–4), "a new weft of a Dorian nightingale" (the "Dorian nightingale" is, of course, Simias). The *Egg* can be regarded, then, as Simias' *sphragis*, which we may compare to the so-called *Seal* of Posidippus (Posidipp. 118 Austin-Bastianini = *SH* 705). It has been suggested that Posidippus' *Seal* may have concluded his collection of epigrams,<sup>58</sup> and I think that the same position in Simias' book of poems *variorum metrorum* would have been appropriate for the *Egg*. With its 20 lines, the *Egg* may have filled a column of a book roll, and another column may have been occupied by the *Axe* and the *Wings* (12 + 12 lines). We may imagine the *Axe* and the *Wings* opening the collection, and the *Egg* concluding it, with other poems – perhaps each of them in a separate column? – placed between them. The book may have borne the title Παίγνια, not only because this was the title of Philitas' book of riddles, but also because the *Egg* and other poems of this sort are referred to as παίγνια by Hephaestio (p. 62.5–6 Consbruch: τὸ Ὠτιὸν τὸ Σιμίου καὶ ἄλλα παίγνια).<sup>59</sup>

As in the case of Philitas, it is unclear to what extent Simias' poetic pursuits influenced:

## 6. Later Poets

But there are several indications of the significant importance of this neglected innovator. His pattern poetry inspired not only the authors of the poems that joined Simias' *technopaegnia* in the collection which has reached us, but also the pre-neoteric poet Laevius who authored the figure poem *Phoenix* that alluded to Simias' *Wings*. Like Simias, Laevius is con-

58 Gutzwiller 1998: 317.

59 The term τεχνοπαίγνια/*technopaegnia* was never used of pattern poems in antiquity; see Guichard 2006: 83–84 and cf. Pappas and Milewska-Ważbińska in this volume.

cerned with producing a metrically innovative composition.<sup>60</sup> I have already mentioned that the choriambic metre, which became the material for the *Wings* and the *Axe*, recurs in Philicus' *Hymn to Demeter* and that Philicus was no less proud of the reapplication of this metre in the stichic poem which he refers to as a *καινόγραφος σύνθεσις* – than Simias himself of his ἄτριον νέον. Furthermore, it has been recently shown that reminiscences of the *Egg* are detectable in several passages throughout the Theocritean corpus.<sup>61</sup>

For Hellenistic riddle books, or books of Παίγνια, that postdate Philitas and Simias, we have even less evidence than for the books of the poets themselves. Nonetheless there are several indications that should not be ignored. In every case, more or less direct inspiration from Philitas' and Simias' Παίγνια can be suspected:

(1) Book 14 of the *Palatine Anthology* was compiled in Byzantine times, but Alan Cameron may be right to argue, with regard to the riddles it contains, that “there seems no good reason to doubt that some are Hellenistic or at any rate based on Hellenistic models”.<sup>62</sup> Note, for instance, 14.18–23 – this is a sequence of riddles which may, I think, come from a relatively early collection in which poems were arranged in alphabetical order. 18–21 all begin with ε, 22 begins with μ, and 23 with ν (the first word of 24 is missing, but 25 begins with ο). I see nothing in their compositional technique to suggest that they cannot be of a relatively early date. The alphabetical arrangement is found e.g. in the *Garland* of Philip and in *P. Oxy.* 1795, which both date from the first century AD.<sup>63</sup>

(2) Παίγνια, as a book separate from Ἐπιγράμματα, is listed among the titles of Aratus' works in the *Suda* s.v. Ἄρατος. According to Livio Sbardella, “è più che probabile che questa raccolta di carmi del poeta di Soli prendesse a modello quella del suo immediato predecessore [i.e. Philitas], recependone gli elementi innovativi”.<sup>64</sup>

(3) *P. Louvre* 7733<sup>v</sup>, dated to the second century BC, contains an extensively annotated riddle on the oyster (*SH* 983–984). It was suggested that this may be one of the Philitean παίγνια,<sup>65</sup> and although there is insufficient evidence to confirm this conjecture, the poem shows much affinity with the apparent features of these παίγνια. Like Philit. fr. 15 Lightfoot, the *Oyster* purports to be a conventional sympotic riddle, one of those which

60 See Courtney 1993: 118–120.

61 Méndez Dosuna 2008.

62 Cameron 1995: 81.

63 See Maltomini 2002: 82–83.

64 Sbardella 2000: 52.

65 Lasserre 1989.

aim at cryptically describing an object normally found at symposia (oysters make a fine *hors d'œuvre* for a drinking party), but a careful reader, such as the commentator whose notes have been preserved in the papyrus, realises that it has more to offer – like Philitt. fr. 8 Lightfoot, the poem is rich in Homeric allusions and its style is highly elaborate. Even if this is not one of Philittas' *παίγνια*, we may agree with Sbardella that “alcuni componimenti presenti nella raccolta dei *Paignia* di Filitta potevano aver esercitato un sensibile influsso sull'anonimo autore del componimento”.<sup>66</sup> Since the *Oyster* may have been composed for a book of non-riddling poems, it cannot be viewed as proof of the existence of riddle collections in the second century BC.<sup>67</sup> However, the poem and the commentary which accompanies it clearly indicate that when the papyrus was written enthusiasts for such books as Philittas' *Παίγνια* were not difficult to find.

(4) The same may be deduced from Lycophron's *Alexandra*. This eccentric *fons eruditionis* may be approached from different angles, e.g. as a sort of tribute to the fourth century's notoriously enigmatic dithyrambic poetry.<sup>68</sup> But another way would be to attempt to see in it a monstrous riddle book rewritten in iambs so as to form one poem (this led Cameron to suggest that this “vastly expanded riddle” may have been “performed in extracts” at symposia<sup>69</sup>). Two of the *technopaegnia*, i.e. the Pseudo-Theocritean *Syrinx* and Dosiadas' *Altar*, were not only inspired by Simias' poems, but also have evident points of contact with the *Alexandra*.<sup>70</sup> These connections suggest that there is some affinity between *παίγνια* and Lycophron's poem, and what this may imply is that the influence of Simias' and Philittas' books of riddles and experimental poems extended beyond the confines of their own narrow field. If further fragments of their *Παίγνια* should ever come to light, I would expect their echoes to be detected in a number of passages throughout the preserved corpus of Hellenistic poetry.

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66 Sbardella 2000: 184.

67 Cf. Sbardella 2000: 183–184.

68 See LeVen in this volume.

69 Cameron 1995: 81.

70 See Hollis 2007: 283.

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## The Rhetoric of the Riddle in the *Alexandra* of Lycophron<sup>\*</sup>

Christophe Cusset & Antje Kolde

One of the key features of Lycophron's obscure poem the *Alexandra* is its distinctive treatment of proper names, whether toponyms, theonyms, or anthroponyms: in the majority of cases, proper names are avoided by the poet and replaced by more or less convoluted descriptions, or by metaphors that often involve episodes, more or less familiar, drawn from the life of a character, or related to the settings of the action.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the frequent absence from Lycophron's text of explicit proper names – a mode of designation that is independent of context – renders the naming of a character or of a place slippery and unstable: the encrypted expressions that substitute for proper names change for one and the same referent depending on the context in which they are used. These onomastic *détournements*, "diversions", are of course far from being without interest for the poet, as they participate in both the discontinuous construction of meaning and the plasticity of the poetic signifier. But for an "ordinary" reader, these onomastic diversions represent obstacles to identifying characters and places, obstacles somewhat difficult to overcome because they belong to the realm of the riddle and should *a priori* take on a ludic aspect.

These diversions are so numerous in the *Alexandra* that we have decided to focus in the following pages first on a series of animal metaphors that produces an array of other word games, and second on riddling expressions through which Lycophron refers to divinities.

One feature connected with the instability of the naming process is the polysemy introduced by metaphor (in particular metaphor pertaining to

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\* This paper was translated from French by Ewa Kondracka. Parts of this paper appeared as Cusset 2009.

1 On these issues of *détournement* from the proper name, cf. Cusset 2001, 2006 and 2007; Sistakou 2009.

animals), which is in Lycophron's work one of the most frequently employed devices for replacing the proper name. To the extent that an animal metaphor is not in fact attached to a unique, individual referent, it becomes possible for a metaphorical signifier to refer to several characters, who may share identical features that secure them the very same metaphorical designation. To gauge the effects of this poetic practice we may take the example of the dog, which with thirteen occurrences is one of the most cited animals in the poem.

We quickly pass over two occurrences of the term κύων that do not seem to be truly metaphorical or to refer to a proper name (unless our reading of the enigmatic text is faulty): these are the two occurrences that designate the sea monster sent by Poseidon to punish Laomedon and devour the young Hesione. The first occurrence is nonetheless quite remarkable, for it appears at the beginning of Cassandra's prophecy, in the very first sentence, and is associated with a lion – this one metaphorical – that represents Heracles.<sup>2</sup> This association generates a certain initial confusion because names belonging to the same semantic register, that of animals, cannot all be understood in the same way: the dog perturbs our reading of the lion (lines 32–34):

...καὶ πρόσθε μὲν πεύκησιν οὐλαμφοῖς  
 τριεσπέρου λέοντος, ὃν ποτε γνάθοις  
 Τρίτωνος ἡμάλαψε κάρχαρος κύων.

...even aforetime by the warlike pineships of the lion that was begotten in three evenings, whom of old Triton's hound of jagged teeth devoured with his jaws.<sup>3</sup>

From one trimeter to the next, a metaphorical zoonym accompanied by an obscure epithet (τριεσπέρου λέοντος) contrasts with another one qualified by a concrete epithet (κάρχαρος κύων). But this juxtaposition of two different metaphoric levels in the very action performed by Triton's dog creates over the course of reading a confusion about the precise boundaries between the spheres of the human, the animal and the monstrous.

If we judge, however, that in the case of Triton's dog there is no pseudonymic metaphor, that is, no metaphor that substitutes for a proper name, we may feel a bit more discomfited when we pass to the register intermediate between monster and human, that of woman – an intermediate register precisely because its first specimen itself partakes of both the human

2 We leave aside here the second occurrence of κύων in reference to the sea monster at line 471. This passage adds nothing more to its description of the beast than the epithet γλαῦκος, which refers the "dog" to the sea world: yet in a sense, this serves to indicate that the term κύων does not refer to a dog in the usual meaning of the term.

3 The translations are by Mair (1921).

and the monstrous. Two other occurrences of κύων are used to designate Scylla, the daughter of Phorcyas – another sea monster, half-animal, half-woman. The first occurrence is in lines 44–47:

ὁ τὴν θαλάσσης Αὔσονίτιδος μυχοῦς  
στενοῦς ὀπιτεύουσαν ἀγρίαν κύνα  
κτανὼν ὑπὲρ σπήλυγος ἰχθυωμένην,  
ταυροσφάγον λέαιναν...

...who also slew the fierce hound that watched the narrow straits of the Ausonian sea, fishing over her cave, the bull-slaying lioness...

The difference between this and the previous example is that the monster in question this time has a well known name which is deliberately left out. And yet, it is possible that this absent proper name is present “under the words” in accordance with an anagrammatic practice fairly common in the text of Lycophron.<sup>4</sup> The syntactic structure framing the passage suggests that the poetic material has been shaped in a distinctive way; it may well be that the name of Scylla (ΣΚΥΛΛΑ), despite being absent, is hidden within a structure that serves as a Saussurean *mannequin*, with the sounds of its initial and final syllables bracketing what might be a theonymic cryptogram:

ὁ τὴν θαλάσσης Αὔσονίτιδος μυχοῦς  
Στενοῦς ὀπιτεύουσαν ἀγρίαν ΚΥνα  
Κτανὼν Ὑπὲρ σπήΛυγος ἰχθυωμένην,  
ταυροσφάγον ΛέαινΑν...

It is here that we find a perfect *mannequin* for the cryptogram and an orderly resolution of the anagrammatization, even if it takes place twice with a repetition of the initial syllable (Σ-KY-KYΛΛΑ). Thus we must also see in the use of κύων here a case of a metaphorical pseudonym, even if we are not far from simple description given the abundance of details that specify what this “dog” does.<sup>5</sup> The presence of the cryptogram is a clear indication of this pseudonymic significance. It is likely that the reference to the dog was suggested by the similarity of sound between Scylla and σκύλαξ, “puppy”,<sup>6</sup> which may be of an etymological nature.<sup>7</sup>

4 Cf. Cusset 2001 and the theoretical remarks on anagrams in Starobinski 1971 and Bader 1993.

5 Note that the various qualifiers (adjectives and participles: ὀπιτεύουσαν, ἀγρίαν, ἰχθυωμένην, ταυροσφάγον) remain external to the resolution of the anagram.

6 See the examples below of this word in Lycophron.

7 This connection has been proposed since antiquity and is found quite explicitly in Hom. *Od.* 12.85–97; see Calame 2000: 243. The etymological link is not challenged by Chantraine (s.v. σκύλαξ), who does not however offer any justification for it. There may also exist a link with the verb σκύλλω “to tear”. In addition, Lycophron’s passage draws on a well established tradition of describing Scylla as a



At this point a second factor seems worth stressing: namely, the fact that the poet brings together two animals, the dog and the lion, for the sake of naming and/or describing the character of Scylla, as if the first were insufficient. Indeed, from the point of view of the anagram, the term κύων by itself *is* insufficient (hence the repetition effect). The insufficiency is also due to the very nature of the referent – this is a character that is monstrous and hybrid,<sup>8</sup> one that accordingly cannot allow itself to be confined, even metaphorically, to a single animal; thus, by means of the juxtaposition, there is a hybridization that operates between the bitch and the lioness for the sake of describing the character more precisely without naming it. In this way, we move from pseudonymic metaphor to determinate description, since metaphor, which tends to suggest that its vehicle may serve as an adequate substitute for its tenor even if the resemblance between the two is inexact, here does not suffice to denote “Scylla”; there exists a kind of neutralizing interaction between the anagrammatization and the pseudonymic metaphor. Moreover, we note that even if the word κύων were deleted from the anagrammatic scheme, the cryptogram could still be reconstructed.

The situation is somewhat different in the second occurrence (lines 668–669):

ποία Χάρυβδις οὐχὶ δαίσεται νεκρῶν;  
ποία δ' Ἐρινός, μιζοπάρθεος κύων;

What Charybdis shall not eat of his [sc. Odysseus'] dead? What half-maiden Fury-hound?

In this passage, an opposition between name and pseudonym is immediately noticeable. Charybdis is actually called by her proper name, as she will be again in line 743. Scylla, who is always associated with her, does not undergo the same fate: on the contrary, two successive equivalences are proposed here. The first is a theonymic pseudonym, Ἐρινός, often used to describe any kind of infernal deity besides Erinys herself.<sup>9</sup> But this first substitute is imperfect, for despite being a proper name it is, paradoxically, vague and a source of too much confusion in its association with “Charybdis”. The point is not in fact to form a novel coupling (as if we might speak of being caught “between *Erinys* and Charybdis”), but rather to refer to

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sea-dog (cf. e.g. Anaxilas fr. 22.4 *PCG* τρίκρανος Σκύλλα, ποντία κύων, “three-headed Scylla, sea-dog”).

8 See the second occurrence below and the compound μιζόθηρος which refers to Scylla in line 650.

9 The name even refers to the Sphinx’s riddle in Eur. *Phoen.* 1019–1032 (from which Lycophron seems to borrow a few elements here). See Hurst – Paduano – Fusillo 1991: 234.

Scylla. Lycophron's solution here is to add a second pseudonym, metaphorical and belonging to the animal world, which refers back to the first mention of Scylla in the text (see above) and actually gives the key to the first pseudonym. The adjective *μυζοπάρθεος*, which accompanies the term *κύων* here, is well chosen to denote the hybrid character of the person (as well as that of its designation); this term doubles, and completes by way of opposition, an earlier description attributed in line 650 to the same Scylla: *μυζόθηρ*. In truth we must search all over the text for the elements that allow us to reconstruct the referent-character, as well as his or her name.

This example reveals clearly how the pseudonymic metaphor functions in the text of Lycophron: the phenomenon of replacing proper names forces the reader to an active reading, one that manipulates the text; one part of the text illuminates another, and a constant circulation is necessary to restore the names under the words.

Two other characters – genuinely female this time – are introduced by the metaphor of the *κύων*. The first, naturally, is Helen (lines 86–87):<sup>10</sup>

Λεύσσω θέοντα γρυνὸν ἐπτερωμένον  
τρήρωνος εἰς ἕρπαγμα, Πεφναίας κυνός...

I see the winged firebrand rushing to seize the dove, the hound of Pephnos...

The same designation is to return in lines 850–851:

Καὶ πάντα τλήσεθ' εἴνεκ' Αἰγύας κυνὸς  
τῆς θηλύπαιδος καὶ τριάνορος κόρης.

And all shall he endure for the sake of the Aegyian bitch, her of the three husbands, who bare only female children.

Two points should be made about the first occurrence. First, as in the case of Scylla, a double metaphor, one that implements a metaphorical hybridization, tries to say something unspeakable about the referent-character whose name is hidden. The very fact that these metaphors require doubling may suggest that, all things considered, a proper name at least has the advantage with respect to linguistic economy. But it also suggests that the character cannot justifiably be reduced to a simple name. The metaphor, with its poetic approximation, may be sufficient – even if in a globalizing and imperfect way – to name the character. Yet this character is presented in a context, and it is something more than just a name that can be blithely introduced into a story; it has a thickness that the doubled metaphor tries, perhaps imperfectly, to render, in places where the proper name would remain purely conventional.

Helen is here both dove and bitch – the two names echo each other at the beginning and end of the line. This combination of the two animals

10 See on this passage Cusset 2001: 69.

raises a second point: if the dove readily connotes femininity through its fragility and vulnerability (especially when it is presented as prey), the bitch initially seems to draw us toward rather different conclusions, for κύων carries its pejorative connotations already in Homer, where Helen applies the term to herself.<sup>11</sup> We must proceed with caution in this case, however, as this bitch is called “Pephaean”, that is to say, originating from a locality of Laconia known as Pephnos. Now the bitches of Laconia had an excellent reputation, as several authors attest.<sup>12</sup> But we may also need to reconsider in an opposed sense the connotations attached to the dove, which seems quite able to refer to a prostitute as well and thus to be just as pejorative as the bitch.<sup>13</sup>

But the ambiguity is resolved by the second occurrence. Here too Helen is described as an “Aegyan bitch”, the epithet referring to another city in Laconia, but the following line dispels any doubts concerning the pejorative value of the animal metaphor: she who multiplies spouses in this way cannot be anything but a woman of easy virtue!<sup>14</sup>

But women are not the only ones to be described by the term κύων in Lycophron’s poem. It can also refer to men, but then, curiously enough, it is always in the plural. In the first case, the plural represents just two people (lines 439–441):

Δοιοὶ δὲ ῥείθρων Πυράμου πρὸς ἐκβολαῖς  
αὐτοκτόνοις σφαγαῖσι Δηράϊνου κύνες  
δμηθέντες...

And two by the mouth of the streams of Pyramus, hounds of Deraenus, shall be slain by mutual slaughter...

11 See Hom. *Il.* 3.180, 6.344, 356 etc. See Schnapp-Gourbeillon 1981: 161–169.

12 This remark is taken from Lambin 2005: 51 n. 39, who cites Pind. fr. 106 Snell-Maehler, Soph. *Aj.* 7–8, Arist. *Hist. an.* 608a27–28, Callim. *Dian.* 93–97.

13 On line 131, where Helen is referred to as κάσσα πελειάς, “wanton dove”, see Gigante Lanzara 2000: 210, who outlines clearly the ambiguous character of this metaphor.

14 The same characteristic of infidelity earns another female character the designation “bitch”, namely Aigialeia, the adulterous wife of Diomedes (lines 610–613): Τροϊζηνίας δὲ τραῦμα φοιτάδος πλάνης | ἔσται κακῶν τε πημάτων παραίτιον, | ὅταν θρασεῖα θουρὰς οἰστρήσῃ κύων | πρὸς λέκτρα (“his wounding of the Lady of Troezen shall be part cause of his wild wandering and of his evil sufferings when a wild lustful bitch shall be frenzied for adulterous bed”). The passage clearly works with the assonance of the group τρ/θρ in order to build up a noteworthy inventory of similar sounds, though the reason for this is not yet obvious. Is it a reference to the city of Troy where Diomedes had dared to strike the goddess during a battle (see Hom. *Il.* 5.534–540)? There does not seem to be any link to the name of Diomedes or to that of his wife. On the tradition concerning Diomedes’ wife, see Hurst – Paduano – Fusillo 1991: 226.

“Deraenus” is Apollo, here named after a cult site located near Abdera in Thrace. The poet refers to two prophets or seers who are called “hounds of Deraenus”, whether because they were faithful interpreters of the god, like a good dog that follows his master, or in order to highlight their fratricidal strife, which cannot help but recall the one of Eteocles and Polynices. The prophets concerned are Mopsus and Amphilocheus, the two sons of Manto, daughter of Tiresias; according to Strabo’s account (14.5.16), they killed each other in a fight for the rulership of Mallus in Cilicia. In fact only the first one is Apollo’s son, while the other is the son of Alcmaeon: the combination of the two proper names into a collective plural effaces not just the proper name but the identity, the proper *life*, of the characters.

The other examples that involve men and metaphorically describe them as κύνες are collective. This occurs in connection with the Achaeans (lines 581 and 1266) and the Phoenicians (line 1291). For our purposes these occurrences would carry us too far afield. But there are still two rather surprising cases, in which the pseudonymic animal metaphor no longer serves as an anthroponymic substitute, but rather as a meteorological and toponymic one. The first concerns a wind of Thrace (lines 924–926):

...οὐδὲ τῇλε Θερμύδρου τε Καρπάθου τ’ ὁρῶν  
πλάνητας αἴθων Θρασκίας πέμψει κύων,  
ξένην ἐποικήσοντας δόνηϊαν χθόνα.

...[the leaders of the Lindians,] whom far from Thermydron and the mountains of Carpathus the fierce hound Thrascias shall send wandering to dwell in a strange and alien soil.

We immediately see the difference in treatment between the characters mentioned before and the present meteorological phenomenon: in the latter case, the animal image does *not* replace the proper name Thrascias, for this is given and indicates at the same time a geographical origin.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the reason for this difference is that the wind is being personified as a warrior<sup>16</sup> and the designation αἴθων κύων is used in order to describe him: in the end this neutralizes the pseudonymic substitution that is present in the “geographical” designation of the wind.

The second example concerns a river for which there is no metaphor, but rather a metamorphosis into a dog (lines 961–962):

...ὧν δὴ μίαν Κριμισσὸς, ἰνδαλθεὶς κυνὶ  
ἔζευξε λέκτροις ποταμός.

15 Though the etymology of *Thrascias* is unclear (cf. *DELG* s.v. Θραῦξ), the scholia demonstrate that Lycophron’s readers saw a connection between it and the region of *Thrace*. Thus the name is a kind of meteorological toponym (or a “meteoronym” based on location).

16 See Gigante Lanzara 2000: 357.

...of these one [sc. Aegesta] the river Crimisus, in the likeness of a dog, took to be his bride.

In this example, we see that Lycophron explicitly refuses to use metaphor even though it was possible. The participle ἰνδαλθείς reflects the image of the dog back on itself, and the animal analogy merely has the value of a transformation of appearance, without involving the naming process at all.

These last two examples, in which a metaphorical pseudonym is deliberately left to the side, call into question the status of the proper name: does a toponym really have the same status as an anthroponym? Why then is the play with pseudonyms only possible in the case of personal names? Is there a connection with the fact that only individuals are susceptible to change, to becoming no longer suited to the name they bear, as opposed to the (at least greater) permanence of places?

To finish with the subject of the dog, let us consider the term σκύλαξ,<sup>17</sup> which competes with κύων especially in the metaphorical designations of male characters.

Nonetheless the first occurrence concerns a woman (lines 314–315):

Οἴμοι δυσαίων, καὶ διπλᾶς ἀηδόνας  
καὶ σὸν, τάλαινα, πότμον αἰάζω, σκύλαξ.

O, me unhappy! The two nightingales and thy fate, poor hound, I weep.

We find in this example a phenomenon of metamorphosis that leads, unlike the previous example of the river, to a pseudonymic metaphor. It involves Hecuba, who was stoned for having blinded the Thracian king Polymestor and then transformed into a dog; this episode of metamorphosis is not absent from the text of Lycophron, but it is reported several lines later through the mediation of the proper name of Erigone's dog, Maira (line 334 Μαίρας ὅταν φαιουρόν ἀλλάλης δομήν, "when thou [Hecuba] shalt put on thee the sable-tailed form of Maira"). Here, in anticipation, it is the pseudonymic metaphor that is used and that will only be justified by the text that follows. The triple apostrophe has here a programmatic and prophetic character: Cassandra begins with a lament of her two sisters, Laodice and Polyxena, as well as of her mother, before turning to the fate which lies in store for them. The relationship between metaphorical pseudonym and personal story suggests that every name has the value of a story, of a "micro-story", to use Claude Calame's terminology:<sup>18</sup> here it is not the metamorphosis into a dog that constitutes an unfortunate destiny, but rather that which precedes it and is designated without further details through the simple term πότμος. Note that the two metaphorical designations (the

17 In fact this term is generally used to describe a young dog, especially in Homer; see Hom. *Od.* 9.289, 12.86 etc.

18 Calame 2000: 243.

nightingale and the dog) balance each other at the end of each line of this distich: quite a curious family, in which a bitch gives birth to nightingales, whereas Cassandra will present herself at the end as a swallow (line 1460).<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the line in which the term σκύλαξ is used has a strong musical potency: its multiplication of diphthongs produces a wail of lament through the course of the trimeter, a lament that finds its conclusion in the final apostrophe.

The last example to be treated here concerns a man, one who is directly related to the river Crimissus that we have already encountered in connection with its metamorphosis into a dog. This passage immediately follows the one quoted above (lines 962–964):

...ἡ δὲ δαίμονι  
τῷ θηρομίκτῳ σκύλακα γενναῖον τεκνοῖ  
τρισσῶν συνοικιστῆρα καὶ κτίστην τόπων.

...and she [sc. Aegesta] to the half-beast god bears a noble whelp, settler and founder of three places.

The son described by the metaphor of the dog is Aegestes, the founder of the city of Segesta in Sicily. Thus the pseudonymic metaphor, rejected earlier for the fluvial father, is operative in the next generation for his son: here Lycophron is playing skillfully on the frequent secondary meaning of the term σκύλαξ, which can also designate a “child”, yet it is perfectly natural for a father transformed into a dog to give birth to a “puppy”. It is quite likely that the micro-biography produced by the addition of line 964 (συνοικιστῆρα καὶ κτίστην), with its emphasis on the group στή, serves to suggest the name Aegestes in these lines; the name of his mother Aegesta – a feminine form of his own – appears at the beginning of line 968 to echo the name that here is only hinted at.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the image of the dog gives us a fairly complete view of how Lycophron uses animals in his poem to support the ambiguity and richness of the poetic discourse. If some occurrences continue to point to an animal referent, most of the time, without any particular distinction, the zoonym has a metaphorical value that lets it act as a substitute for a proper name, most often for an anthroponym; then it is the context, largely elliptical, that allows the pseudonymic metaphor to be justified. This practice of binding

19 See the examples of hybridization above.

20 There is one additional example of the term σκύλαξ that is more problematic (lines 991–992): ὅταν θανὼν λήταρχος ἱερείας σκύλαξ | πρῶτος κελαινῷ βομῶν αἱμάξῃ βρότῳ (“when the minister son of the priestess dies and stains first the altar with his dark blood”). The character’s identity is uncertain; it could be the son born of Cassandra after she was raped by Ajax. The term σκύλαξ definitely has the value of a pseudonymic metaphor here, but the proper name eludes us.

the designation to a context stands in opposition to the rigid designation that the proper name offers, detached from any context and exempt from any temporal variation. By contrast, the animal metaphor never comes to a stop and is never particularized; it can always be applied to some other individual. The dog, though it may be man's best friend, is also characterized in particular by its aptitude for switching onomastic masters on each occasion.

Let us now turn to our second topic: those designations of gods that are coded or, to put it another way, riddling. The gods in Lycophron's poem essentially suffer a fate very similar to that of men as far as their designation is concerned: the usual theonyms seldom appear and the poet frequently uses coded or compound designations, usually metaphorical or periphrastic. These metaphors and periphrases are distinctive in several respects: the poet always employs at least two of them to designate any given divinity; though a single expression might have several possible divinities as its referent, there is always only one divinity who can fit *all* of the expressions used to refer to it. In addition, the expressions pertaining to a given divinity can be concentrated in a single passage or, what is much more common, appear spread out over several passages: these passages may be quite distant from each other, though they are usually connected through one or more words and thus complementary. In other words, if we compile all the possible referents for each of the expressions that refer to a divinity and then compare them – whether the riddle thus constructed is confined to a single passage or extends over several – we can eliminate solutions that are not shared by every expression until we reach the single one that solves all the “sub-riddles”. Though Lycophron is hardly alone in using metaphor and periphrasis to create his riddles, it is uncommon to accumulate several of them in a single passage, and still less common to distribute them over several passages that are interconnected at the level of diction or sound. Yet these two procedures do not surprise when employed by an author devoted to the fragmentation of information.<sup>21</sup> It follows that, in order to solve the coded designations of deities, the essential thing is to isolate the network formed by the distribution of the gods' epithets and epicleses, and then to determine the referent common to the different metaphors and periphrases.

As we shall see, the examples of Persephone and Hecate offer a good illustration of this enigmatic mode of referring to divinities.

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21 See Cusset and Kolde 2012.

Persephone appears three times in Lycophron's poem, but never under that name.<sup>22</sup> She is first mentioned in line 49; the subject is Scylla, who does not fear death:

...Λέπτυνιν οὐ τρέμουσαν οὐδαίαν θεόν.

...she who feared not Leptynis, goddess of the underworld.

The referent of Λέπτυνιν is clarified for the reader by the addition of οὐδαίαν θεόν, which shows that Lycophron considers the name to be feminine, and therefore that he interprets it as the name of Persephone (as the scholiast also emphasizes), and not that of Hades.

The epithet οὐδαία establishes the link between this passage and the next appearance of Persephone, in line 698; the context is Odysseus' wanderings in southern Italy, through places connected with the infernal world and neighboring Cumae and Naples:

...Ὀβριμοῦς τ' ἄλσος, οὐδαίας κόρης,

...and the grove of Obrimo, the Maiden who dwells beneath the earth.

The identification with Persephone, already assured by the adjective οὐδαία, is confirmed by the presence of κόρη, even if the widespread epicleris of Persephone, Kore, is seemingly a noun here and not a proper name. It should be noted, however, that the two terms οὐδαία and κόρη follow another epicleris, Ὀβριμῷ. According to the scholia, this name of Persephone would refer to the scream she uttered when Hermes tried to rape her. For those who did not know it, its meaning becomes clear because it is correlated with the other two terms in a network.

Finally, a few lines later, in 710–711, the text mentions a sacrifice that Odysseus will offer to Daeira and her husband:

θήσει Δαείρα καὶ ξυνευνέτη δάνος  
πύληκα κόρη κίονος προσαμύσας.

He shall offer up a gift to Daeira and her consort, fastening his helmet to the head of a pillar.

“Daeira” denotes Persephone at Athens; according to the scholia, it would be derived from δαίς, the ritual torch used in the mysteries or carried by the goddess herself.<sup>23</sup> That the passage concerns Persephone and not another goddess is indicated above all by the narrative context and the reference to a “consort”, who is none other than Hades.

Hecate, in turn, appears in connection with two episodes: first when the poet describes the departure of Dardanus from the island of Samo-

22 The name is, of course, not easily adapted to the meter, and never occurs in the iambic trimeter of tragedy.

23 For Persephone-Daeira, cf. Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 45.



thrace, and then, by means of a number of periphrastic naming constructions, in the lines evoking the fate of Hecuba.

The first occurrence is in line 77, in the context of the journey that Dardanus made from Samothrace to the Troad, on the occasion of the third deluge:

...Ζήρυνθον ἄντρον τῆς κυνοσφαγοῦς θεᾶς.

...Zerynthos, cave of the goddess, to whom dogs are slain.

Here the goddess is designated only by the geographic location of a place of worship, Zerynthos, a cave on the island of Samothrace,<sup>24</sup> and a periphrasis concerning the victims that were sacrificed to her.

These two elements – the connection with dogs and the geographical location – also occur among the many periphrastic expressions that mark the second episode in which she appears, in lines 1174–1188. This new context clarifies the significance of both elements:

ὦ μήτηρ, ὦ δύσμητερ, οὐδὲ σὸν κλέος  
ἄπυστον ἔσται, Περσέως δὲ παρθένος 1175

Βριμὴ Τρίμορφος θήσεται σ' ἐποπίδα  
κλαγγαῖσι ταρμύσσουσιν ἐννύχοις βροτούς,  
ὅσοι μεδούσης Στρυμόνος Ζηρυνθίας  
δείκνυται μὴ σέβωσι λαμπαδουχίαις,  
θύσθλοισι Φεραίας ἐξακεύμενοι θεᾶν. 1180

ψευδήριον δὲ νησιωτικὸς στόνυξ  
Πάχυνος ἔξει σεμνὸν ἐξ ὀνειράτων  
ταῖς δεσποτείαις ὠλένας ὠγκωμένον  
ρείθρων Ἐλώρου πρόσθεν ἐκτερισμένης·  
ὅς δὴ παρ' ἅκταις τλήμονος βανεῖ χοάς, 1185  
τριάχενος μήνιμα δειμαίνων θεᾶς,  
λευστήρα πρῶτος οὐνεκεν ῥίψας πέτρον  
Ἄϊδη κελαινῶν θυμάτων ἀπάρξεται.

O mother, O unhappy mother! Thy fame, too, shall not be unknown, but the maiden daughter of Perseus, Triform Brimo, shall make thee her attendant, terrifying with thy baying in the night all mortals who worship not with torches the images of the Zerynthian queen of Strymon, appeasing the goddess of Pherae with sacrifice. And the island spur of Pachynus shall hold thine awful cenotaph, piled by the hands of thy master, prompted by dreams when thou hast gotten the rites of death in front of the streams of Helorus. He shall pour on the shore offerings for thee, unhappy one, fearing the anger of the three-necked goddess, for that he shall hurl the first stone at thy stoning and begin the dark sacrifice to Hades.

In these lines, Cassandra announces for the second time the fate of her mother: after being stoned, she will be transformed into a dog and become a companion of Hecate, as Cassandra had already predicted in lines

24 For the location, see the *Suda* s.v. Σαμοθράκη and the scholia to Ar. *Pax* 277. Elsewhere Lycophron locates Zerynthus in Thrace (see the next paragraph).

330–334. This second prophecy is somewhat more detailed, since no fewer than five periphrastic expressions and one epiclesis refer to Hecate, who is never called by her most common name. The first expression, “the maiden daughter of Perseus”, is a genealogical periphrasis: we know from Hesiod’s *Theogony* (lines 409–411) that Hecate is a daughter of Perses, and the scholia to our passage suggest that Lycophron has allowed himself a certain poetic license in altering the name to Perseus. Then comes the sole epiclesis, Βριμώ, which is formed after Ὀβριμώ, the epiclesis of Persephone that we have already encountered and that creates a link between the two goddesses. After this the poet introduces a pseudonym referring to the form of the goddess (Τρίμορφος), followed by a geographical periphrasis (“the Zerynthian queen of Strymon”): this periphrasis refers back to the earlier passage that mentioned Hecate through the adjective “Zerynthian”, though in the present case Lycophron seems to place Zerynthus in Thrace, as suggested by the context. The next line contains a new geographical periphrasis (Pherae, like Strymon, refers to Thrace), followed, in 1186, by the final periphrasis. This one refers, just like Τρίμορφος above, to the form of the goddess: τριάχενος ... θεᾶς. One cannot help but notice that the last four periphrases form a chiasmus: appearance – geography – geography – appearance; moreover the first and last one are closely related on a lexical level because both begin with the prefix τρι-. Though the identity of the goddess might have remained obscure in the earlier passage, the abundance of information that we are given in the present one dispels any uncertainty: the genealogical and geographical data that focus on Thrace; the relationship with Artemis implied by one of the place names, Pherae; the epiclesis Brimo, which refers to Persephone and echoes the even more obscure Obrimo from line 698;<sup>25</sup> the emphasis on the number three in the prefix τρι-, which on the one hand recalls the sky, the land and the sea, the three domains that have been allocated to Hecate according to Hesiod’s *Theogony* (lines 413–415), and on the other evokes Hecate’s triple shape;<sup>26</sup> finally the nightly barking with which Hecuba will frighten those who do not honor the goddess in question; all these elements, when taken together, limit the possible referents of each expression, so that in conjunction they could refer to no one other than Hecate.

These examples of the naming of divinities, which are organized around the two goddesses Persephone and Hecate, clearly show how the correlation of different expressions into a network can allow one to solve the riddle. It should be noted, however, that the networks mentioned so far are internal to the poem of Lycophron: they refer to passages that may be

25 For Brimo, cf. Ap. Rhod. 3.861.

26 Cf. Chariclid. fr. 1.1–2 *PCG* δέσποιν’ Ἑκάτη τριοδίτι | τρίμορφε, τριπρόσωπε.

quite distant from each other but nonetheless all belong to the text of the *Alexandra*. In other passages, enigmatic epicleses seem to create a game of both intratextual and intertextual allusions.

The central part of the *Alexandra* is devoted to the prophecy that Cassandra gives about the return of Odysseus (lines 648–819). In the middle of this passage, and indeed in the middle of the central episode, the suicide of the Sirens, Cassandra announces the suicide of the second siren, Leucosia. She kills herself on the jutting bank of Enipeus, at Paestum (Posidonia) itself or on the cape between Paestum and Elea (line 722):

...ἀκτὴν δὲ τὴν προῦχουσαν εἰς Ἐνιπέως...

...on the jutting strand of Enipeus...

According to the scholia, “Enipeus is a name by which Poseidon is honored in Miletus”. Why did Lycophron choose Enipeus to encode the name of Poseidon? Unfortunately we know nothing about this epiclesis or its cultural context. If Lycophron did intend a reference to Miletus in choosing this name for Poseidon, the geographic epiclesis, however obscure it is for us, ought to have held some significance for him, though we do not know what. Yet the poet might also have used the epiclesis for the following reason: There is a river named Enipeus in Thessaly. The princess Tyro fell in love with it, and Poseidon seized the opportunity to take on the river’s appearance and seduce her, as recounted in the *Odyssean νέκυια* (11.235–259). The intertextual link that the name Enipeus establishes between Lycophron’s passage and this one could hardly be accidental: just as the report of the second Siren’s suicide constitutes the central passage of the *Alexandra*, so the νέκυια is a key passage among Odysseus’ stories at the court of the Phaeacians.

Poseidon establishes an intratextual link between Lycophron’s mention of Enipeus and a second passage in which the poet once again evokes the *Odyssey*. In lines 766–767, the god is referred to by the epiclesis Ἰππηγέτης:

οὔπω μάλ’, οὔπω· μὴ τοσόσδ’ ὕπνος λάβοι  
λήθης Μέλανθον ἐγκλιθένθ’ Ἰππηγέτην.

Ah! not yet, not yet! Let not such sleep of forgetfulness find Melanthus, the Lord of Horses, bending.

The context is the same as in the first passage, i.e., the prophecy concerning the return of Odysseus. Here are the lines that lead up to the excerpt quoted above (lines 761–767):

And crossing to the island abhorred by Cronus – the isle of the Sickles that severed his privy parts – he a cloakless suppliant, babbling of awful sufferings, shall yelp out his fictitious tale of woe, paying the curse of the monster whom he blinded. Ah! not yet, not yet! Let not such sleep of forgetfulness find Melanthus, the Lord of Horses, bending.

In Lycophron's narrative, Odysseus is in Corfu, the homeland of the Phaeacians; Lycophron is alluding to the stories told there by Odysseus, including the νέκυια, which was evoked above through the connection between Poseidon and Tyro via Enipeus. As we can see, the linking of line 722 and lines 766–767 in a network allows a better comprehension of the two passages; it is Poseidon, the common referent of the various epicicleses used in both passages, who allows this linking to occur.<sup>27</sup> One additional observation is called for. The latter passage illustrates very well the recurring feature that most divine names in the *Alexandra*, though they never refer explicitly to the Homeric model, nonetheless allude to the text of Homer in one way or another.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Lycophron tells one of the most famous episodes of the *Odyssey*, the one that explains Poseidon's wrath against Odysseus – namely, the encounter with Polyphemus – only through delicate allusive touches that are incomprehensible to anyone who does not know the *Odyssey*. One of these allusions is in the present passage: line 765, “paying the curse of the monster whom he blinded”; the others are in lines 569–661. And the play with the *Odyssey* does not stop there. When speaking of the “Sleep of forgetfulness...” in lines 766–767, Lycophron allows himself a small allusive permutation: in the *Odyssey*, it is Odysseus who undergoes periods of supernatural sleep, in particular when he arrives in Ithaca – after the Phaeacians had helped him! – with an enjambement that, as it seems, Lycophron's text recalls: οὐδ' Ἐνοσίχθων | λήθετ' (Hom. *Od.* 13.125–126).

From our analysis of this selection of examples, first of the use of the canine metaphor and then of the encoded names of deities, we may draw two conclusions. In the first place, Lycophron has frequent recourse to metaphors that possess two distinguishing characteristics: they are obscure, and they echo each other over the course of the poem. Second, these mutually reinforcing metaphors encourage Lycophron's readers to develop a strategy for deciphering his γρίφοι, the riddles that confront them in those passages whose language is so obscure that they find themselves caught as if in a net: the strategy consists in creating another γρίφος, that is to say, in constructing a network or net that brings together all the pieces of information disseminated by Lycophron, sometimes in several passages, and that allows us, by correlating them, to find the solution to the riddle.

27 According to the scholia, Μέλανθος and Ἰππηγέτης are two epicicleses of Poseidon, the former in Athens, the latter in Delos.

28 See Cusset and Kolde 2012.

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## *In scirpo nodum:* Symphosius' Reworking of the Riddle Form

Erin Sebo

*Furor est profecto, furor egredi ex eo et, tamquam interna eius cuncta plane iam nota sint, ita scrutari externa, quasi vero mensuram ullius rei possit agere qui sui nesciat, aut mens hominis videre quae mundus ipse non capiat.*

Pliny, *Natural History* 2.4<sup>1</sup>

The *Symphosii Scholastici Aenigmata* is a collection of one hundred Latin riddles, introduced by a *praefatio* in which he tells the (obviously fictional) story of how the riddles were invented as part of the games at the feast of the Saturnalia. This text is the sole surviving work of a late fourth- or early fifth-century author identified only by the pseudonym “Symphosius”.<sup>2</sup> Each riddle deals with a different subject drawn from the physical world. These *aenigmata* took the form of obscure and witty descriptions, each designed to illuminate the aspects of their subject which are most extraordinary, paradoxical, and obscure. With a few exceptions, Symphosius' riddles are not explicitly framed as questions and each is solved by its own lemma. The *Aenigmata*, then, is a strange, anomalous work. It also appears to be an innovative work; nothing similar is to be found in Gellius, Athenaeus, or even Aristotle's discussions of the riddle genre. Indeed, Symphosius' own *praefatio* suggests that his collection of one hundred highly

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- 1 “It is madness, perfect madness, to go out of this world and to search for what is beyond it, as if one who is ignorant of his own dimensions could ascertain the measure of any thing else, or as if the human mind could see what the world itself cannot contain”. Tr. Bostock 1855: 16.
  - 2 There has been considerable debate around the correct dating of Symphosius. Müller places him as early as the second or third century because of his excellent Latinity and command of metrics. See Müller 1894: 39. By contrast, Riese (1894: xxvi) argues that he was contemporary with the compilers of the earliest manuscript, the *Codex Salmasianus*. However, there is now a scholarly consensus that Symphosius probably lived in the late fourth and early fifth century. See Bergamin 2005: xiv; Ohl 1928: 15.

wrought (and as I will argue) interconnected literary riddles is unusual, even unique. For here Symphosius gives an account of his riddles' origin which, though clearly false, assumes a culture of oral riddling familiar to his audience. The *Praefatio* reveals that within Symphosius' milieu there is still a conception of riddles as oral and agonistic – as in our best late antique source on riddling, Athenaeus.<sup>3</sup> Symphosius' riddles, presented to their audience already solved, are in the greatest possible contrast. It appears that in composing the *Aenigmata* Symphosius transforms or “translates” a genre which, even when it appears in literary works, was still essentially connected to its oral, “folk” past. In thus removing the Riddle form from its popular context as a guessing game, so to speak, and endowing it with a new autonomy and intertextual sophistication Symphosius “invents” what was later termed the Literary Riddle; it is no wonder that he is regarded by modern scholars as “il fondatore di un genere”.<sup>4</sup>

But Symphosius not only honed the form of individual riddles, he also opened new expressive and noetic possibilities by assembling a collection of one hundred riddles organized as an interconnected, unified work in its own right. As I will argue in this chapter, Symphosius' *Aenigmata* offers a unique imaginative representation of the material universe in all its diversity and ability to confound our expectations. I will argue that Symphosius has produced a carefully schematized work in which every aspect – imagery, form, structure and setting – is integral. It seems to me that his innovative departure from past models of riddling is, in itself, enough to warrant our search for such a schema and that our search rewards us with an enhanced understanding of the complexity and interwoven intratextuality<sup>5</sup> of Symphosius' collection. Indeed, because his use of titular solutions deprives the audience of the possibility of “guessing” his riddles in the usual way, this becomes the game or challenge for the audience; to perceive the complexity of the riddles' mechanisms, the layered patterns which order the collection, and the world view expressed by it. By presenting us with solved riddles, Symphosius forces us to go looking in *scirpo nodum*, “for a knot in a bullrush”, to go looking for trouble. Or, since *scirpus* may also mean “riddle”, to go looking “for the knot in the riddle”.<sup>6</sup> When we are

3 On riddling and other verbal symposia games, see Lukinovich 1990.

4 Bergamin 2005: xx.

5 Intra-textuality, or the internal relation between parts of a text, has been well explored in a recent volume which offers the memorable definition of intratextuality as the study of “how parts relate to parts, wholes, and holes”. Sharrock and Morales 2000: 5.

6 The proverb in *scirpo nodum quaeris* is widely attested. The earliest example is in Plautus (*Men.* 247). It means “you are looking for trouble”, literally, “you are looking for a knot in a bullrush”. See Lowe in this volume.

presented with a riddle collection which gives us answers before questions, as it were, what else should we do?

The extent of this departure from the “game” of riddling has often been overlooked by scholars. This oversight is well demonstrated in Riese’s assessment that Symphosius’ riddles are too easily guessed, of which, in turn, Hickman du Bois jokes “[t]he fact ... that Symphosius has very considerably given the answer to each [riddle] as its title, may have something to do with Professor Riese’s criticism that they are ‘easily guessed’”.<sup>7</sup> There has been a tendency to regard Symphosius’ century of riddles as an anthology of individual riddles rather than as a unified work in which all textual features – including lemmata<sup>8</sup> – contribute to the overall effect. This scholarly disposition to think about each riddle in isolation arises from the practice of medieval writers and editors who cannibalized Symphosius’ text and commandeered riddles for their own works or for inclusion in new poetic or riddlic miscellanies: Symphosius’ riddles “circulated widely in the medieval period; later riddle collections frequently rephrased those of Symphosius or simply borrowed riddles from him wholesale”.<sup>9</sup>

As has long been recognized, Symphosian riddle centuries – collections like that of Symphosius or those he inspired – act as “a kind of encyclopaedia”.<sup>10</sup> However, the taxonomical principles that govern its organization are not immediately clear to a modern audience, except in the most general way, and very little scholarly attention has been paid to what the overall effect of this structure might be. Yet, Symphosius gives us every cue that the *Aenigmata* is a highly literary work, not least in that he sets his riddles in the context of a Saturnalian feast and in so doing immediately associates the *Aenigmata* with the time of the winter solstice and with a particular set of religious ideas which encompass notions of renewal and misrule. In itself this suggests that Symphosius has overarching literary aims and may well prompt us to expect that they will be reflected in all aspects of the *Aenigmata*. The present discussion will examine the structure of the *Aenigmata* and outline the world view implicit in it. It will consider how this world view corresponds to the mechanics of Symphosius’ riddles; that is to say, how Symphosius enacts his world view in the process the audience undergoes in their reading of the text and contemplation

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7 Hickman du Bois 1912: 9.

8 Of course, lemmata are later additions of a manuscript tradition; however, as Hickman du Bois’ comment suggests, in the case of Symphosius, they appear to be original. Indeed, Bergamin sites their similarity to Martial’s lemmata in the *Xenia* as evidence for the Saturnalian “ambientazione” of the *Aenigmata*. See Bergamin 2005: xix.

9 Bayless 2002: 157.

10 Erhardt-Siebold 1932: 252.



of the solutions. Symphosius also reveals an interest in origins and change as a way of interrogating and understanding the nature of things; I hope to show that Symphosius creates a Saturnalian view of the world which stresses cyclical change, reversal and above all else, plurality in all things.

I began this paper with a quote from Pliny which argues that an understanding of the natural world is necessary before any other kind of philosophical or religious speculation can be productively undertaken. In particular he argues against the madness of one *qui sui nesciat* ("who is ignorant of himself") attempting to understand other, greater things. He presents his *Historia naturalis* as an attempt to understand the human world and the human condition as a preparation for greater questions. Symphosius' "encyclopaedic" *Aenigmata* may be viewed in similar terms. In their interest in life and death, origins and metamorphoses, reversals and cycles, the riddles probe the material world and ultimately beyond it.

Of all the innovations which set Symphosius apart from his predecessors and most heavily influence his literary descendants, the most significant is the notion of the collection itself. This is a trademark which persists in the Symphosian tradition after all its other elements have been transformed almost beyond recognition. Even Martial's *Xenia*<sup>11</sup> (probably a significant formal influence on Symphosius) differs on this point since the *Xenia* often presents several epigrams on the same topic, and the work moves from one topic to another with no stronger structuring principle than that all the epigrams on the same subject are collected together. The number of epigrams on any given subject seems entirely dictated by the limits of Martial's inventiveness, that is, by the number of paradoxes, puns or verbal plays which occurred to him in relation to it. Symphosius, on the other hand, composes one riddle per subject and orders them so that they trace a trajectory through the totality of the physical world that finally circles back upon itself.

Over the course of the one hundred riddles, Symphosius emphasizes the paradoxical, even the miraculous, in the everyday and the familiar. In fixing upon those aspects of a thing which are surprising, he makes his reader reconsider their perceptions of the world. The hundred riddles are organized in terms of a range of internal ordering devices rather than by a single principle – even here Symphosius is disposed to plurality. The three major strategies are: similarity of riddle subject, similarity of motif or theme, and aural similarity of lemmata. The primary organizing principle is similarity of riddle subject. By this means, the *Aenigmata* are categorized

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11 Bergamin 2005: xix. As Grewing (2002) points out in his review of Leary's (2001) *Martial Book XIII: the Xenia*, the "literary closeness" of the *Aenigmata* and the *Xenia* is an area in need of further investigation.

into loose groups, the three largest and most prominent of which are animals, plant life and man-made artefacts. Often subject-based groups overlap; it is not unusual for sequences of riddles to belong to more than one of these. In addition to subject-based groups, clusters of riddles often share similar ideas or themes. For example, several neighbouring riddles from the “animal” category share the motif of “mixed species parentage”. This thematic similarity is not necessarily evident from the lemmata, but rather emerges from the notions, imagery, and motifs foregrounded by Symphosius in the content of a riddle. It is important to note that this kind of noetic linking often cuts across the larger, subject-based groupings. Finally, individual riddles may be placed together on the basis of a rhyme, consonantal rhyme, or assonance in their lemmata, as in *Grus* and *Mus* (“Crane” and “Mouse”), or *Tinea*, *Aranea*, and *Coclea* (“Bookworm”, “Spider” and “Snail”), or *Calx* and *Silex* (“Lime” and “Flint”). Or they might be placed together because of a similarity of word, as in *Specular* and *Speculum* (“Window Pane” and “Mirror”), or *Malum* and *Malleus* (“Apple” and “Hammer”).<sup>12</sup> This system of internal echoes also cuts across other groupings. In what follows it will emerge that reading the links, commonalities, and divergences is part of the riddling challenge Symphosius sets his audience. However, the intricacies of the *Aenigmata*’s web of almost infinite interconnections ultimately defy total analysis.

The early riddles of Symphosius’ collection are often (though not always) light-hearted, in the vein of the witty and linguistically dexterous *Graphium*. However, as the collection progresses towards *Monumentum*, the riddles become increasingly sombre.<sup>13</sup> The body of the *Aenigmata* is a catalogue of the empirical and the finite but in his final riddles, Symphosius looks beyond this. At the very end of the collection, in the last line,

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12 This delight in aurality is apparent in *Porcus* and *Lapis* (“Pig” and “Stone”) where the riddle asks a secondary riddle which may be solved by taking away letters from the riddle’s lemma, leaving us with words which rhyme with the riddles’ titular solutions, *orcus* and *apis* (“deity” and “bee”). It is also expressed in Symphosius’ puns on Greek words. In *Malum* (“Apple”) he puns on μῆλον meaning “sheep”. In *Beta*, not only is the title a bilingual pun but, according to Renehan, Symphosius’ use of *tota* in *tota vocor Graece, sed non sum tota Latine* should make us think of τὴ τα (i.e., τα needs to be added to the Latin name of the letter to give its Greek name *beta*). See Renehan 1981.

13 The three final riddles, *Umbra*, *Echo* and *Somnus* have morbid overtones. In addition to signifying “shadow”, *umbra* may refer to the ghosts of the dead. In the plural the word can refer to the Underworld. *Echo* too is imbued with gloomy associations since the nymph, Echo, loses the power to speak for herself as she loses her corporeal form and transforms into an intangible sound – a kind of death. Finally, sleep and death are indissolubly linked in ancient thought. In the *Iliad* they are described as twins (16.682).

Symphosius asserts that *vita tamen superest morti post tempora vitae* ("nevertheless, life survives death after the time of life", 100.3). This is a statement appropriate to the Saturnalia, a festival concerned with, on the one hand, time, seasonal, and cyclical change, and misrule and reversal on the other. Unlike a teleological view in which events build upon each other in a linear progression towards an ultimate goal, the Saturnalia celebrates a world constantly in flux, always moving on and always returning. The festival of Saturn, the god of time, celebrates the turning of the year and so enshrines the conception of circular or cyclical time. Within this circular conception, Symphosius emphasizes images of reversal, renewal, and return. The writing of the *stylus* in the first riddle of the collection, *Graphium*, is ephemeral, while the pathos of *Monumentum* comes from the futility of the attempt to transcend time by erecting a lasting monument to the dead individual. Yet, as we have seen, the riddle also envisages that even death gives way to life: *vita tamen superest morti*. Like the Phoenix who claims in one of the earlier riddles that *vita mihi mors est, morior si coepero nasci; | sed prius est fatum leti, quam lucis origo* ("life to me is death; I die if I begin to be born; | but the doom of death is before the beginning of life", 31.1–2), *Monumentum*, proclaims that life and death are part of an endless cycle in which endings and beginnings are inextricably entwined.

This cyclic conception informs every aspect of Symphosius' collection. The opening image of the *Aenigmata* is of the seasons (re)turning. It begins: *Annua Saturni dum tempora festa redirent* ("When the time of the feasts of Saturn was making its annual return", *praef.* 3<sup>14</sup>). Similarly, the first riddle is about the *stylus* which writes and erases and writes again. Even Symphosius' syntax enacts reversal; the undoing of the *stylus*' actions is positioned before their doing, *altera pars revocat quidquid pars altera fecit* ("one part undoes what the other has done", 1.3). Later, in *Murra*, the final line of the riddle also reverses the order in which events occurred. Symphosius speaks first of the *laetus honor frondis* ("happy glory of green boughs", 48.3) that is, of the tree which Myrrha<sup>15</sup> eventually becomes, and then of the as yet untransformed woman as the *imago doloris* ("image of sorrow", 48.3). As we shall see, this narrative of Myrrha's transformation is part of an intertextual fabric of aetiological myths which underpins the collection, all recounting new beginnings from old endings.

14 In fact, this may be the opening line of the *Aenigmata*, as *praef.* 1–2 are thought to be an interpolation.

15 *Myrrha*, the most usual Latin word for "myrrh", is the name usually given to the nymph. When referring to the resin or the plant, I have used the usual English spelling, "myrrh". Symphosius, characteristically, blurs the issue by using the less common Latin word for myrrh, *murra*.

But perhaps most significantly, circularity is enacted in the very structure of the *Aenigmata* which begins and ends with riddles on writing. Furthermore, this circularity is confirmed by the echoing of the lemmata of the first and final riddles, a relation of assonance which neither shares with its neighbour. The opening pair is *Graphium/Harundo* and the closing pair is *Somnus/Monumentum*. Thus *Monumentum* completes the circle by forming a half rhyme with *Graphium* and so the collection loops back upon itself.

The reversal at the heart of the *Aenigmata* is that Symphosius endows inanimate things and animals with a voice and consciousness. Animal subjects and objects speak directly in the first person and the audience is encouraged to identify with them and their concerns.<sup>16</sup> In fact there are only ten riddles (*Flumen et piscis*, *Pediculus*, *Pons*, *Tubus*, *Silex*, *Rotae*, *Balneum*, *Luscus Alium Vendens*, *Funambulus*, and *De VIII tollas VII et remanet VI*) which are not written in the first person. Significantly, most of these are *not* about animals, but about human figures or the products of civilization. The exceptions prove the rule: *Pediculus*, for example, is a third person animal riddle but here Symphosius is retelling an old riddle (Homer's riddle) rather than composing a new one and he has retained the original third person perspective because the riddle does not work without it.<sup>17</sup> The overwhelming effect of the *Aenigmata* is to force us to see in new ways and from new perspectives. In general we are alienated from the familiar human perspectives and aligned with the animal, vegetable, mineral, meteorological (and sometimes even the manmade) Other; a radical reconceptualizing of the world fitting for a misrule festival. In most of the human riddles, the human figure is not distinguished from the elements in their environment: the mother from her twins, the garlic-seller from his garlic, the soldier from his battle line.<sup>18</sup> Thus, their physical boundaries and distinct human identity are blurred. Indeed, in *Mulier quae geminos pariebat*, the mother begins by telling her story in the first person, but retreats into the third person: *tertia* [sc. *anima*] *paene peregit* ("the third soul [which refers to herself] nearly perished", 92.3). Here we see her alienated from herself by her own anguish. In Symphosius' representation, humans

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16 First person riddles are common in the ancient world. West (2007: 367) comments that it is not clear "whether it is of Indo-European antiquity. Its European distribution is compatible with a Classical origin".

17 Symphosius often reworks traditional, ancient paradoxes, many of which, if they are not in the first person already, are easily transferred into it. *Pediculus* and *Flumen et piscis* are exceptions to this rule.

18 This reading explains strange reference to the soldier having five feet: his own two feet and the three feet of frontage assigned to each soldier in close formation. For a full account of this reading see Sebo Forthcoming.

are distant and physically removed by contrast with the vividly realized psychological immediacy of, for instance, the vine in *Vitis*.

Having alienated the audience from the normative human perspective, Symphosius' riddles encourage us to adopt the view point and stance of a range of Others. Rather than present us with a hierarchical view which privileges the human perspective, Symphosius seems to delight in giving a voice to all who are usually denied it. He is even prepared to defy Juno's curse and restore to Echo the ability to speak for herself and so, mischievously, he has her tell her own story.<sup>19</sup> From riddle to riddle, the reader is forced to shift perspectives and inevitably allegiances as well. Each new perspective may be opposite of the previous one, tangential to it, or only slightly divergent from it. This dynamic multiplicity ensures that the *Aenigmata* cannot be reduced to dichotomies any more than to a single perspective.

Plurality is expressed in the very mechanics of Symphosius' riddles. Typically, a riddle starts with ambiguity; its disparate clues suggest various possibilities, none of which turn out to be completely satisfactory, but ultimately, the conundrum is resolved by a single answer and certainty is achieved. In short, riddles tend to move from a complex of potential answers to a single solution. By contrast, each riddle in the *Aenigmata* begins with a simple entitled "answer" but, as I will argue in the following, this initial "answer" is increasingly problematized. Symphosius uses language in such a way that although the clues are (in most cases)<sup>20</sup> consistent with the stated answer they are suggestive of other answers as well. Thus Symphosius' riddles move their audience, not from complexity to certainty, but in the opposite direction from certainty to complexity.

Although the entitled solution became ubiquitous later, it was apparently unusual in Symphosius' time.<sup>21</sup> Ancient critical works on riddling suggest that the very idea of presenting a solution defeated the purpose of a

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19 Echo was a nymph who fell in love with Narcissus but when she is rejected by him, fades in grief to become an insubstantial echo. Ovid recounts the story (*Met.* 3.339–510). In his version Echo loses corporeal form because of her unrequited love, but loses the ability to speak of her own volition because of Juno's curse (*Met.* 3.366–367). Juno curses the nymph because she waylaid the goddess with conversation and thus prevented her from catching Jove in one of his many adulterous liaisons.

20 *Lapis*, whose answers do not seem entirely consistent, is the exception which proves the rule.

21 As noted in n. 8 above, this feature was probably copied from Martial's *Xenia* – as Bergamin (2005: xix) notes, these epigrams have "in alcuni casi titoli identici a quelli di Simposio".

riddle. Aulus Gellius says of his riddle<sup>22</sup> that *reliquimus inenarratum, ut legentium coniecturas in requirendo acueremus* (“I have left it unanswered, in order that I might whet the reasoning of my readers in seeking for an answer”, Gell. 12.6.1). In order to avoid both negating the purpose of the riddle and leaving the riddle unanswered, he advises his readers to look up the answer for themselves: *Hoc qui nolit diutius apud sese quaerere, inveniet quid sit in M. Varronis De sermone Latino ad Marcellum libro secundo* (“He who does not wish to puzzle himself all day will find the answer in the second book of Varro’s *Latin Language, addressed to Marcellus*, 12.6.3”).<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, in the ancient world it was not unusual for riddles that had become widely known and orally disseminated to play off against the universally known answer. Although, so far as I am aware, scholars have not identified this strategy as a typical kind of ancient riddling, there are numerous examples of it in ancient sources, enough, I believe to suggest that it may well have been a common kind of verbal sparring. For example, we know from Athenaeus that the following well known riddle was variously answered “bear”, “eagle”, “serpent”, or “dog”:<sup>24</sup>

τί τὰντὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ ἐν θαλάττῃ;  
(Ath. 10.453b)

What is the same in the sky, on earth, and in the sea?<sup>25</sup>

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- 22 Gellius’ riddle consists of three verses, just like Symphosius’ riddles: *semel minusne an bis minus sit nescio, | an utrumque eorum; ut quondam audiui dicier, | Iovi ipsi regi noluit concedere* (“I know not if he’s minus once or twice, | Or both of these, who would not give his place, | As I once heard it said, to Jove himself” Gell. 12.6.2, tr. Rolfe 1927: 383). However, as we see, the comparison ends there, for Gellius’ riddle is constructed around a play on words, unlike Symphosius, whose riddles usually lack such a “trick” but instead rely on enigmatic, partial or metaphorical descriptions of things. On three-line riddles, see also Lowe in this volume.
- 23 Gellius’ solution to this perennial problem for anyone writing down riddles is particularly ingenious. However, there are many possibilities. By the late Renaissance collections of riddles such as *Riddles of Heraclitus and Democritus* are being published with solutions printed *below* the riddle itself so that the answer came *after* the question, while the modern convention is to print solutions in microscopic font upside down at the bottom of the page.
- 24 Τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶν ὁμωνυμία· καὶ γὰρ ἄρκτος καὶ ὄφις καὶ αἰετὸς καὶ κύων ἐστὶν ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐν γῇ καὶ ἐν θαλάσσῃ (“This involves the use of equivocal words; for the bear, the serpent, the eagle and the dog are found in the sky, on earth and in the sea”, Ath. 10.453b, tr. Gulick 1930: 555). Gulick explains that the bear is “Great and Little Bear, also the bear-crab”, the snake is the “constellation Serpens, also a kind of fish, Ophidium” and the eagle is the “constellation Aquila, also *Myliobatis aquila*, a kind of ray”.
- 25 Tr. Gulick 1930: 555.

In *Wasps* Aristophanes adapts this riddle in order to mock the cowardice of Kleonymos who is supposed to have dropped his shield so as to more speedily save himself during the battle of Delium in 424 BC. The slave, Sosias, suggest mockingly that men may now ask each other a new riddle:

τί ταῦτόν ἐν γῇ τ' ἀπέβαλεν κἀν οὐρανῷ  
κἀν τῇ θαλάττῃ θηρίον τὴν ἀσπίδα;  
(Ar. *Vesp.* 23–24)

What is that brute which throws away its shield alike in air, in ocean, in the field?<sup>26</sup>

Aristophanes clearly alludes to the well-known riddle but, by the addition of the phrase “throws away its shield”, suggests a new answer. The implication in the original riddle that any creature which could inhabit the earth, the seas, and the heavens must be marvellous indeed, becomes a measure of boundless cowardice. Athenaeus' Cynulcus, a Cynic philosopher, refers to this technique of playing a new solution off against a universally known answer when he speaks of a “a well-known riddle about a fish recast as an insulting joke directed at a rival musician”,<sup>27</sup> or about the hetaera who “recasts the riddle posed by the Sphinx and solved by Oedipus ... into an obscene advertisement for her sexual expertise”.<sup>28</sup> Athenaeus also quotes an example of a similar reworking by Antiphanes of the riddle which the fishermen ask Homer. This well known riddle runs:

ὅσ' ἔλομεν λιπόμεσθα, ὅσ' οὐχ ἔλομεν φερόμεσθα.  
(*Certamen* 18)

The ones we caught we left behind, the ones we missed we carry.<sup>29</sup>

The answer is, of course, “lice”, but Antiphanes punningly reworks it so as to have a different solution:

...ὁπότε προστάζει τέ τις  
εἰπεῖν ἐφεξῆς ὅ τι φέρων τις μὴ φέρει,  
ἐγέλων νομίζων λῆρον οὐκ ἄν γεγόμενον  
οὐδέποτε γ', οἶμαι, πρᾶγμα παντελῶς λέγειν,  
ἐνέδρας δ' ἔνεκα. νυνὶ δὲ τοῦτ' ἔγνωχ' ὅτι  
ἀληθές ἦν· φέρομεν γὰρ ἄνθρωποι δέκα  
ἔρανον τιν', οὐ φέρει δὲ τούτων τὴν φορὰν  
οὐδεὶς. σαφῶς οὖν ὅ τι φέρων τις μὴ φέρει,  
τοῦτ' ἔστιν, ἦν θ' ὁ γρίφος ἐνταῦθα ῥέπων.  
(Antiphanes fr. 122.3–11 *PCG*  
ap. Ath. 10.448f–449b)

...whenever a man enjoined us to guess in succession what somebody brought which he did not bring, I used to laugh, thinking he was talking drivel of a thing

26 Tr. Rogers 1924: 411.

27 McClure 2003: 270.

28 McClure 2003: 266.

29 Tr. West 2003: 351.

which could never by any possibility happen, just to catch us. But today I have come to realize that it is true after all; for we are ten men contributing to a club, and yet not one of us contributes any contribution of these viands. Plainly, then, what somebody brings which he does not bring is this, and that riddle applies to us here.<sup>30</sup>

The audience was familiar with Homer's riddle and its usual solution and, as in Aristophanes, the play between the two solutions is the source of the passage's humour. The poet uses this riddling technique to give force to his point. This kind of riddling tends to be used as a mechanism of topical social critique since in each case the riddler takes a well known riddle and applies it to a present situation.<sup>31</sup>

It is only possible to use this technique if the riddler employs riddles which are well known to his audience. But Symphosius' riddles are largely original and his audience therefore could not possibly know the answers. So, in his case, the technique may only be employed if he first establishes the answers to his new riddles which he will later problematize. It is an ingenious solution. It also has the consequence of ensuring that the comic effect which this technique creates in the other examples cited is absent in Symphosius. Usually, the ancient audience would be anticipating the well-known answer to the riddle right up to the point where they are surprised with a new solution, the comedy deriving from their disappointed expectations. But in Symphosius, the audience is faced with an "answer" before they know the question. So reading the riddle involves a continuous comparison between the already-provided answer and each new clue. This process is contemplative, not comic, and rather than displacing one answer with another, Symphosius' text encourages us to see that the entitled solution is one among many possible answers.

Since Symphosius' riddles come to us already solved, the interest in reading them is to follow the twists and turns of their logic, allusion, intertext and word play. We must go looking, as I suggested at the beginning, *in scirpo nodum*. Symphosius' riddles allow different answers to co-exist and this is reflected on a broader level in that, throughout the *Aenigmata*, Symphosius explores and enacts plurality in as many ways as possible; in his multiple ordering strategies, his multiple riddling strategies, in his juxtaposition of multiple mythic narratives within a single riddle, and finally though the adoption of multiple world views – a new one in each riddle.

30 Tr. Gulick 1930: 533–535.

31 Tellingly, playing alternative answers against a riddle's "real" answer is a common feature of later riddles in the Symphosian tradition. It is most obviously found in the Obscene Riddles of the *Exeter Book*, though some critics even detect it in the riddles of the Child Ballads. See Atkinson 2002. It is perhaps also present in Thomas Wyatt's *A Riddle of a Gift Given By a Lady*.



Symphosius' myriad strategies work in concert in the same way that Symphosius allows other pluralities, such as multiple answers, to remain in non-conflicting juxtaposition. Perhaps most remarkably of all, Symphosius seems to delight in avoiding his own perspective, in favour of those which are alien to him; a true expression of the misrule and reversal of the *Saturnalia*.

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### III. Visual Poetry in the Text and on the Stone



# The Treachery of Verbal Images: Viewing the Greek *technopaegnia*

Alexandra Pappas

## 1. Introduction

The earliest Greek calligrams, conventionally called *technopaegnia*,<sup>1</sup> are poems that form the shape of a material object on the page by varying their line-length. Common modern terms for this subgenre include “pattern” or “concrete” poetry, the terminology of which one contemporary poem riffs on (fig. 1):

**concrete poems: play with letters form  
space words fonts ideas shapes image.  
concrete block forms filled with water  
words images poems  
words images poems  
words images poems  
words images poems  
gravel sand cement gravel sand gravel.  
concrete poems: play with letters form  
space words fonts ideas shapes image.**

Fig. 1: Michael P. Garofolo, *Concrete Block*.

<http://www.gardendigest.com/concrete/cvp211.htm> (accessed August 2012)

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1 Also called *carmina figurata* in Latin, the term *technopaegnia*, “games of skill”, is not coined until the fourth century AD by Ausonius (*Id.* 12), nor is it used in reference to shaped poetry until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in Poland and in Italy, respectively (conference discussion; cf. Milewska-Ważbińska in this volume).

In a verbal-visual *mise en abyme* of the building metaphor, this so-called concrete poem constructs the image of a concrete building block with the words “images”, “gravel”, “sand”, and so on. In this composition, the word is every bit as much material for the literary construction of a concrete poem as gravel and sand are for the physical construction of a concrete block; the poem has been made concrete, and concrete has been made by the poem.

I begin with this poem as a programmatic icon for this essay, noting especially the shifting registers between what its words mean verbally and what they do visually, and the challenges the poem issues to our notions of reality and representation. In my view, the Greek *technopaegnia* demand to be read in precisely these intermediary, interdisciplinary terms.<sup>2</sup> As such, this paper will explore the kinds of viewing dramatized by the *technopaegnia* – with their relentless, two-way play of text against image, content against form, and presence against absence.<sup>3</sup> By focusing in particular on the labor of the viewing audience, my goal is to consider the literary and visual cultures within which this new poetic form was constructed and what, in turn, it constructed culturally. Finally, since I see the *technopaegnia* themselves as a critical discourse on literary and visual aesthetics, I also want to interject this corpus for the first time into the ongoing debate about the relationship of Hellenistic “art” and “art history” to Archaic and Classical Greek media. Although they exhibit numerous qualities that we readily identify as “distinctly Hellenistic”, my aim is to situate the *technopaegnia* within a larger Greek continuum – as a specific, but not isolated, moment within the ever-evolving relationship between the Greek literary and visual arts. We begin with a brief summary of each of the poems.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Terms much like those in productive tension in the iconic *La Trahison des images* (*The Treachery of Images*), whence this essay’s title. There, René Magritte has neatly and confidently inscribed the phrase “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” (“This is not a pipe”) beneath the image of a pipe (*La Trahison des images*, 1928–1929; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California). For a rich treatment of Magritte’s painting, see Foucault 1983.

3 Higgins (1989: 209) observes of pattern poems in general: “A pattern poem is an intermedial poem that is literary, visual, and sometimes social in its conception, usually mimetic in its visual image, in which all of these elements are conveyors of meaning”. We shall see each of these elements borne out by the *technopaegnia*.

4 I present the overview of the poems in the (loosely chronological) order in which they are given in Gow [1952] 1966. I also consider their sequential arrangement in the *Greek Anthology*, and its effect on the viewing audience. On the transmission of the texts and their shapes, see, e.g., Ernst 1991: 54–94; Strodel 2002: 9–128; Guichard 2006 and, most recently, Kwapisz Forthcoming, whose new monograph on the pattern poems is a cogent and thorough treatment not only of the poems’ texts, transmission, and authorship, but also provides a much-needed English

## 2. Overview of the Poems' Content

Simias' *Wings* creates the image of wings spread for flight with lines of choriambics that decrease and then increase by one-foot increments. The voice is Eros' and he speaks in language familiar from dedicatory epigram as he personifies the image of his wings, a metonymic representation of his form.<sup>5</sup>

Λεῦσέ με τὸν Γᾶς τε βαθυστέρνου ἄνακτ' Ἀκμονίδαν τ' ἄλλυδις ἐδράσαντα,  
μηδὲ τρέσης εἰ τόσος ὢν δάσκια βέβριθα λάχναις γένεια·  
τᾶμος ἐγὼ γὰρ γενόμαν ἀνίκ' ἔκραιν' Ἀνάγκα,  
πάντα δὲ γᾶς εἶκε φραδαῖσι λυγραῖς  
ἐρπετά, πάνθ', ὅσ' ἔρπει 5  
δι' αἶθρας·  
Χάους δέ,  
οὔτι γε Κύπριδος παῖς,  
ὠκυπέτας ἦδ' Ἄρεος καλεῦμαι·  
οὔτι γὰρ ἔκρανα βία, πραῦνόφ δὲ πειθοῖ· 10  
εἶκε δέ μοι γαῖα θαλάσσας τε μυχοὶ χάλκεος οὐρανός τε·  
τῶν δ' ἐγὼ ἐκνοσφισάμαν ὠγύγιον σκάπτρον, ἔκρινον δὲ θεοῖς θέμιστας.<sup>6</sup>

Gaze upon me, the ruler of deep-bosomed Earth, and the one who set the son of Acmon apart, do not run in fear if, being such a size as I am, my bushy cheeks are laden with down.

For I was born then, when Necessity governed and all things gave way to her baneful warnings, those that creep, all things, as many as creep through the air. 5

But the child of Chaos, and not at all of Cypris nor the swift-flying child of Ares am I called; for in no way did I govern by force, but by gentle-minded persuasion 10 and to me yielded the earth and the folds of the sea and the bronze sky; and from them, I took a primeval scepter and determined divine laws for the gods.<sup>7</sup>

The poem turns on Eros' ekphrasis of himself not as we might expect – as the mischievous infant son of Aphrodite and Ares – but rather as the ancient and hirsute offspring of Chaos familiar from Orphic cosmology, who exercises the power of boundless dominion.<sup>8</sup>

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commentary. This last addition to the scholarship is most welcome, and I only wish I had had access to it at an earlier stage of my own research on this paper, which no doubt would have improved this work.

5 As Tueller (2008: 21) quantifies, in dedicatory epigrams from 700–300 BC, the object speaks the majority of the time.

6 The text of the *technopaegnia* adapted from Gow [1952] 1966.

7 All translations are my own.

8 See Strodel 2002: 158–271 for commentary on all three of Simias' poems. See also Laevius' *Pterygium Phoenicis*, a first-century BC Latin *carmen figuratum* in the shape of (a phoenix's) wings (Laevius fr. 22 Courtney). Rather than focus on Eros,

In his *Axe* poem, Simias again plays with the conventions of traditional epigram as he frames the dedication of a double-axe with an image of the axe itself. Unlike the process of reading *Wings*, here we must first unscramble the order of the poem's descending and ascending choriambic lines since they cannot be read in order.<sup>9</sup> We can either read the first line first and the last line next and move successively inward in this fashion, or work from the inner pair of lines to the poem's outer pairs, pairing like with metrical like to make semantic sense of the poem.<sup>10</sup>

We witness the dedication of this axe to Athena by Epeius, whom Simias credits with destroying the "god-built towers" (πύργοι θεότευκτοι). This recalls Epeius' role in the destruction of Troy as told in the *Odyssey*, since with Athena's help he made the wooden horse instrumental in the surprise attack by the Greeks within the citadel walls.<sup>11</sup> This, we gather, is the very axe used to fell and shape the wood for constructing the horse.

|                                                                   |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Ἀνδροθέα δῶρον ὁ Φωκεὺς κρατερᾶς μηδοσύνας ἦρα τίνων Ἀθάνᾳ        | 1  |
| τάμος, ἔπει τὰν ἱερὰν κηρὶ πυρίπνῳ πόλιν ἠθάλωσεν                 | 3  |
| οὐκ ἐνάρτιμος γεγαῶς ἐν προμάχοις Ἀχαιῶν                          | 5  |
| νῦν δ' ἐς Ὀμήρειον ἔβα κέλευθον                                   | 7  |
| τρίς μάκαρ, δὲν σὺ θυμῷ                                           | 9  |
| ὄδ' ὄλβος                                                         | 11 |
| ἀεὶ πνεῖ.                                                         | 12 |
| ἵλαος ἀμφιδερχθῆς                                                 | 10 |
| σὰν χάριν, ἀγνὰ πολύβουλε Παλλάς                                  | 8  |
| ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κρανᾶν ἰθαρᾶν νᾶμα κόμιζε δυσκλής                        | 6  |
| Δαρδανιδᾶν χρυσοβαφεῖς τ' ἐστυφέλιξ' ἐκ θεμέθλων ἄνακτας          | 4  |
| ὥπασ' Ἐπειὸς πέλεκυν, τῷ ποτε πύργων θεοτευκτῶν κατέρειπεν αἶπος. | 2  |

this last poem of the *erotopaegnia* is about Venus as the mother of love/Love and the *genetrix* of desire, and so reappropriates the conventional genealogy of Eros denied by Simias. A more distant example of the influence Simias' *Egg* exerted for centuries can be found in the *Poetices libri septem* of Julius Scaliger (1561), in which the miniature egg of a nightingale and the much larger egg of a swan are juxtaposed (on modern pattern poetry, in particular from Poland, Milewska-Ważbińska in this volume).

- 9 See Guichard 2006 for the shapes the *Axe* took in various manuscripts. He concludes that the layout in the *Greek Anthology* is likely the earliest since there it lacks a handle.
- 10 It may be fruitful to connect the flexibility of this forward and/or backward reading to the development of palindromes, explored most recently by Luz 2010: 179–211 (cf. also Bartol in this volume). See specifically Luz 2010: 194 for her discussion of a particular type of palindrome comprised of multiple sentences that can be read from the beginning or the end to the same effect (*Anth. Plan.* 387c.7–8).
- 11 *Od.* 8.492–495; 11.523.



Phocian Epeius gave a gift to the man-goddess Athena, honoring her strong counsel, an  
 axe, the one with which he once destroyed the height of the god-built towers, then,  
 at that time when he burned the holy city of the Dardanians with  
 fire-breathing destruction and thrust out the  
 golden-clothed rulers from 5  
 their foundations;  
 he had not been  
 counted among the champions  
 of the Achaeans, but rather as a lowly man  
 who carried water from the pure springs, but now he embarks 10  
 upon a Homeric path, thanks to you, holy Pallas of many counsels. Thrice blessed  
 is the man whom you, gracious in your heart, behold. Such blessedness breathes forever.

Like the *Axe*, Simias' *Egg* requires the reader to solve a metrical riddle to make semantic sense of its contents: the eye must move successively inward, pairing like metrical lines until concluding in the poem's center.<sup>12</sup>

|                                                                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Κωτίλας                                                                             | 1  |
| τῇ τόδ' ἄτριον νέον                                                                 | 3  |
| πρόφρων δὲ θυμῷ δέξο, δὴ γὰρ ἀγνάς                                                  | 5  |
| τὸ μὲν θεῶν ἐριβόας Ἑρμᾶς ἔκιξε κάρυξ                                               | 7  |
| ἄνωγε δ' ἐκ μέτρου μονοβάμονός με τὸν πάροιθ' ἀέξειν                                | 9  |
| θοῶς δ' ὑπερθεν ὠκὺ λέχριον φέρων νεῦμα ποδῶν (σποράδων) πίφασκεν                   | 11 |
| θοαῖς ἴσ' αἰόλαις νεβροῖς κῶλ' ἀλλάσσων, ὀρσιπόδων ἐλάφων τέκεσσι                   | 13 |
| πάσαι κραίπνοις ὑπὲρ ἄκρων ἰέμεναι ποσὶ λόφων κατ' ἀρθμίας ἵχνος τιθήνας            | 15 |
| καί τις ὠμόθυμος ἀμφίπαλτον αἶψ' αὐδᾶν θῆρ ἐν κόλποις δεξάμενος θαλαμῶν μυχοιτάτοις | 17 |
| κᾶτ' ὅκα βοᾶς ἀκοᾶν μεθέπων ὄγ' ἄφαρ λάσιον νιφοβόλων ἀν' ὀρέων ἔσσυται ἄγκος       | 19 |
| ταῖς δὴ δαίμων κλυτὸς ἴσα θοοῖσι(ν ὁδὸν) δονέων ποσὶ πολύπλοκα μεθίει μέτρα μολπᾶς  | 20 |
| ρίμφα πετρόκοιτον ἐκλιπὼν ὄρουσ' εὐνὰν ματρὸς πλαγκτὸν μαϊόμενος βαλῖας ἐλεῖν τέκος | 18 |
| βλαχᾶ δ' οἶων πολυβότων ἀν' ὀρέων νομὸν ἔβαν ταυσφύρων τ' (ἀν') ἄντρα Νυμφᾶν        | 16 |
| ταῖ τ' ἀμβρότῳ πόθῳ φίλας ματρὸς ῥώοντ' αἶψα μεθ' ἱμερόντα μαζόν                    | 14 |
| ἵχνει θένων †τὸν† παναίολον Πιερίδων νομόδουπον αὐδᾶν                               | 12 |
| ἀριθμὸν εἰς ἄκραν δεκάδ' ἵχνίων κόσμον νέμοντα ῥυθμῶν                               | 10 |
| φῶλ' ἐς βροτῶν ὑπὸ φίλας ἐλὼν πετροῖσι ματρός                                       | 8  |
| λίγειά μιν κάμ' ἀμφὶ ματρὸς ὠδὶς                                                    | 6  |
| Δωρίας ἀηδόνος                                                                      | 4  |
| ματέρος.                                                                            | 2  |

12 The context in which the eye would have met the poem has been the matter of some debate. Alan Cameron (1995: 33–7) follows Wilamowitz 1899: 243–250; Fränkel 1915: 57–59; 83; and Gow [1952] 1966: 179, “versus ovo solido circum-scribendi”, in the notion that the *Egg*, along with Simias' other poems, was composed for inscription on actual objects. My conclusion, along with, e.g. Bing 1988: 15, is that the *Egg*, like the rest of the *technopaegnia*, was originally intended for inscription on the page. See Prier 1994, Lukinovich 2001, and Guichard 2006 for additional discussion, in particular of Simias' *Egg*.

Lo there!  
 This is the new  
 warp of a twittering mother,  
 a Dorian nightingale. Receive it in  
 good spirit, for the shrill labor of a pure  
 mother bore it. Hermes, loud-shouting herald  
 of the gods, taking it from under the wings of its  
 dear mother carried it to the tribes of mortals and ordered  
 me increase the number from a meter of one foot onward to  
 ten feet at the outermost, keeping the order of the rhythms and  
 bearing them quickly from up above, he made manifest the swift,  
 slanting direction of (scattered) feet, striking, he traced out that ever-  
 rapid, variegated, lawful-sounding cry of the Pierians, exchanging limbs  
 equally for swift, rapid fawns, offspring of light-footed deer and they, from  
 immortal desire of their beloved mother rushed forward speedily after the  
 desired teat, all go with rushing feet over the highest peaks along the path  
 of their communal nurse. And with a bleat they traverse the mountain-  
 pastures of the much-nourishing sheep and the caves of the slender-  
 ankled Nymphs. And some savage-hearted beast hearing their re-  
 echoing cry in the innermost hollows of his lairs, swiftly leaving  
 his bedrock bed rushed violently forward, seeking to snatch a  
 wandering offspring of the dappled mother and then swiftly  
 following hard upon the sound of the cry, this beast  
 straightaway hastened along the shaggy hollow of  
 the snow-beaten mountains. Indeed, the famed  
 god urging them on the path to stir  
 with swift feet equally set loose  
 intricate measures  
 of song.

Within a complex metrical scheme, Simias weaves a metapoetic account of a nightingale's egg taken from its nest and set among mortals by Hermes. The poem then focuses on the racing footsteps of fawns who, wanting to feed off their mother, run around their mountain pastures until a wild mountain beast threatens them with pursuit. Throughout the poem, Simias binds the content of the narrative very closely to his wild metrical innovations.

A century or two later (?), the author of the *Syrinx* introduces an additional level of play that requires the reader to solve semantic, rather than metrical, riddles.<sup>13</sup>

13 The authorship and date of the *Syrinx* have been much disputed, largely because of its gradated shape. According to Gow (1973: 553–554), it could not have been composed by Theocritus as the poem itself claims (line 12), since its “stepped” form is not attested securely until after the mid-second or into the first century, when similarly shaped instruments appear on Roman coins. Note, however, the reference in Luz 2010: 329 n. 7 to Haas 1985: 55–57, cf. 271, fig. 3, who shows

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Οὐδενὸς εὐνάτειρα, Μακροπτολέμοιο δὲ μάτηρ<br>μαίαις ἀντιπέτροιο θοὸν τέκεν ἰθυντήρα,<br>οὐχὶ Κεράσταν, ὃν ποτε θρέψατο ταυροπάτωρ,<br>ἀλλ' οὐ πελιπὲς αἶθε πάρος φρένα τέρμα σάκους,<br>οὔνομ' Ὀλον, δίζων, δς τὰς μέροπος πόθον                                                                                                                         | 5  |
| κούρας γηρυγόνας ἔχε τὰς ἀνεμώδεος,<br>δς Μοίσα λιγὸν πᾶξεν ἰοστεφάνῳ<br>ἔλκος, ἄγαλμα πόθοιο πυρισμαράγου,<br>δς σβέσεν ἀνορέαν ἰσανδέα<br>παπποφόνου Τυρίας τ' ἐ(ξήλασεν).                                                                                                                                                                              | 10 |
| ᾧ τόδε τυφλοφόρων ἐρατὸν<br>πῆμα Πάρις θέτο Σιμιχίδας·<br>ψυχᾶν ᾧ, βροτοβάμων,<br>στήτας οἷστρε Σαέττας,<br>κλωποπάτωρ, ἀπάτωρ,                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 15 |
| λαρνακόγυι, χαρεῖς<br>ἄδῳ μελίσδοις<br>ἔλλοπι κούρα,<br>Καλλιόπα<br>νηλεύστῳ.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 20 |
| The bed-fellow of no one and mother of the far-fighter<br>bore the swift guide of the nurse of the one replaced by a stone,<br>not Cerastas, whom the one sprung from the bull once reared,<br>but him whose heart was formerly burnt by the <i>pi</i> -lacking rim of a shield,<br>whole in name, a double animal, who had desire for the voice-dividing | 5  |
| maiden, born of sound, like the wind,<br>he who constructed a shrill wound for the violet-crowned Muse,<br>a monument of fire-roaring desire,<br>he who quenched the courage by the same name<br>of the grandfather-slayer and (freed) the Tyrian woman.                                                                                                  | 10 |
| The one to whom Paris Simichidas offered this beloved<br>possession of those who carry the blind;<br>delighting your soul with it, you who trample on men,<br>goad of the Saettian woman,<br>son of a thief, without a father,                                                                                                                            | 15 |
| box-footed one,<br>may you play sweetly<br>to the mute maiden,<br>beautifully-voiced,<br>invisible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 20 |

This dedicatory poem creates the shape of a gradated pan-pipe, beginning with pairs of dactylic hexameters that diminish one half-foot per pair into

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that the form of diminishing pipes is attested as early as the classical period. Consensus on the author and date of the poem remains inconclusive, although here it does not affect interpretation. For commentary, see Ernst 1991: 74–82; Männlein-Robert 2007b: 150–154.

catalectic dimeters at the conclusion, and has as its veiled subject Pan and his various loves. In this case, the poem's shape is an important early clue for decoding its difficult riddles. A brief consideration of lines 4–5, which begin the list of references to Pan, proves the point: “him whose heart was formerly burnt by the *pi*-lacking rim of a shield, whole in name, a double animal...” The scholia assist here, explaining that another word for the rim of a shield (τέρμα σάκου) is ἵτυς, and when it is no longer lacking a *pi*, it becomes Pitys (Πίτυς), the name of a nymph loved by Pan. So, too, the phrase “whole in name” puns cleverly on Pan's name since ὅλον and πᾶν are synonyms, and he is rightly called a “double animal” (δίζων) as both man and goat. The poem's simple message that Pan has constructed a syrinx for the Muse Calliope and should play it sweetly is complicated by its riddles, which the shape, in turn, helps to clarify.

With elaborate riddles that sometimes require cross-referencing with the *Syrinx*, Dosiadas creates a poem in the shape of a sacred altar.<sup>14</sup> Its metrical variations construct the monument, and metrical cola and feet are building blocks for the altar as poem and as physical object.

|                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| Εἰμάρσενός με στήτας                     |    |
| πόσις, Μέροψ δίσταβος                    |    |
| τεῦξ', οὐ σποδεύνας ἱνίς Ἐμπούσας, μόρος |    |
| Τεύκροιο βούτα καὶ κυνὸς τεκνώματος,     |    |
| Χρύσας (δ') αἶτας, ἄμος ἐννάνδρα         | 5  |
| τὸν γυνόχαλκον οὖρον ἔρραισεν,           |    |
| ὃν ἀπάτωρ δίσευνος                       |    |
| μόγησε ματρώριπτος.                      |    |
| ἐμὸν δὲ τεῦγμ' ἀθήσας                    |    |
| Θεοκρίτσιο κτάντας,                      | 10 |
| τριεσπέραιο καύστας                      |    |
| θώυξεν † ἀνιύξας                         |    |
| χάλεψε γάρ νιν ἰῶ                        |    |
| σύργαστρος ἐκδυγήρας,                    |    |
| τὸν δ' † ἐλλινεδύντ' ἔν ἀμφικλύστῳ       | 15 |
| Πανός τε ματρός εὐνέτας, φῶρ             |    |
| δίζφος, ἱνίς τ' ἀνδροβρῶτος Ἰλорαιστᾶν   |    |
| ἦρ' ἀρδίῳν ἐς Τευκρίδ' ἄγαγον τρίτορθον. |    |

14 The literary tradition preserves frustratingly little about Dosiadas, although Lucian *Lex.* 25 provides a *terminus ante quem* of c. 150 AD. This *Altar*'s similarities to the Ps.-Theocritean *Syrinx* (date unknown) and Lycophron's *Alexandra* are tantalizing, if inconclusive. Reitzenstein (1905: 1596) and Wilamowitz (1884: 12–13; 1899: 57) imagine the *Alexandra*, dated more securely to the first quarter of the second century BC, to be a model on which the *Syrinx* and Dosiadas' *Altar* rely. The direction of influence remains difficult to determine, although scholarly consensus now locates Dosiadas in the Imperial period along with Besantinus (Ernst 1991: 83–90).

The husband of a woman in man's  
 clothing, an articulate, twice-young man,  
 built me, not the one lying on ashes, son of the shape-shifter,  
 whose death was caused by a Teucrian herdsman, offspring of a dog,  
 but the beloved of Chryse, when the cook-of-men 5  
 crushed the bronze-limbed guardian  
 whom the fatherless, two-wived man,  
 thrown by his mother, toiled over.  
 Looking upon my monument,  
 the slayer of Theocritus, 10  
 the burner of three-night-man,  
 shouted out †squealing,  
 for it wounded him with poison,  
 the belly-trailing defier of old age.  
 And him †catching with nets† in the place surrounded by waves 15  
 both the bed-fellow of the mother of Pan, a thief,  
 twice-living, and the son of the man-eater, for the sake of  
 the Ilion-destroying arrows, led to the thrice-destroyed Teucrian city.

Unraveling its riddles, we read that Jason, husband of Medea built the altar (1–3), that it is the very altar upon which Philoctetes gazed when he was bitten by a venomous snake (9–14), and that Odysseus and Diomedes retrieved Philoctetes from Lemnos in order to bring about the final destruction of Troy (15–18).

Finally, Besantinus also constructed an *Altar* poem. This poet innovates on the earlier calligrams by embedding an acrostic in its left margin that vertically constructs the address, “Olympian, may you sacrifice for many years” (Ὀλύμπιε, πολλοῖς ἔτεσι θύσειας).<sup>15</sup>

Defining itself as an altar not for bloody sacrifice but rather as the locus for libations sweeter than the honey of Hymettian bees, the poem assures in its conclusion that it does not harbor any dangerous monsters like that other altar in Thracian Neae – familiar, of course, to the readers of Dosiadas’ poem as the site of the altar and covert snake that bit Philoctetes.

15 On the interpretation of the address of its acrostic to Hadrian with the vocative, “Olympian”, Besantinus’ *Altar* has long been associated with the Hadrianic period (e.g., Gow 1914: 138; Ernst 1991: 83–90). More specifically, although I retain the poet’s conventional Greek name as it is preserved in the manuscripts, I am convinced by his identification as Lucius Iulius Vestinus, an official at Hadrian’s court; on this reading, the poem stands as a literary version of the many material altars dedicated to Hadrian in honor of the Olympieion dedication in Athens, AD 131/132 (Bowie 2002: 185–189, followed and developed by Kwapisz Forthcoming). Although I have omitted this poem from previous analyses of the *technopaegnia* (Pappas 2004; 2011), I include it here in order to consider the poems as a cohesive group, especially from the perspective of their viewership as an ordered, arranged corpus.

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| Ολὸς οὖ με λιβρὸς ἱρῶν<br>Λιβάδεσσιν οἷα κάλλης<br>Υποφονίῃσι τέγγει,<br>Μαύλιες δ' ὕπερθε πέτρῃ Ναξίῃ θοούμεναι<br>Παμάτων φεῖδοντο Πανός, οὐ στροβίλῳ λιγνύι<br>Ιξὸς εὐώδης μελαίνει τρεχνέων με Νυσίων·<br>Ες γὰρ βομὸν ὀρής με μήτε γλουροῦ<br>Πλίνθοις μήτ' Ἀλύβης παγέντα βάλοις,<br>Οὐδ' ὃν Κυνθογενὴς ἔτευξε φύτλῃ<br>Λαβόντε μηκάδων κέρα,<br>Λισσαῖσιν ἀμφὶ δειράσιν<br>Οσαι νέμονται Κυνθίαις,<br>Ισόρροπος πέλοιτό μοι·<br>Σὺν Οὐρανοῦ γὰρ ἐκγόνους<br>Εἰνάς μ' ἔτευξε γηγενής,<br>Τάων δ' ἀείζων τέχνην<br>Ενευσε πάλμυς ἀφθίτων.<br>Σὺ δ', ὦ πῶν κρήνηθεν, ἦν<br>Ινις κόλαψε Γοργόνος,<br>Θύοις τ' ἐπισπένδοις τ' ἔμοι<br>Υμηττιάδων πολὺ λαροτέρην<br>Σπονδῇν ἄδην. ἴθι δὴ θαρσέων<br>Ες ἐμὴν τεύξιν, καθαρὸς γὰρ ἐγὼ<br>Ἴὸν ἰέντων τεράων, οἷα κέκευθ' ἐκείνος,<br>Ἀμφὶ Νέαις Θρηκίαις δὲν σχεδόθεν Μυρίνης<br>Σοί, Τριπάτωρ, πορφυρέου φῶρ ἀνέθηκε κριοῦ.<br>The dripping mud of sacrificial victims<br>does not, like purple, moisten me<br>with bloody-red streams,<br>and the knives sharpened on the Naxian stone<br>spare the property of Pan. The sweet-smelling berry<br>of Nyssian twigs does not darken me with whirling smoky flame.<br>Indeed, you look at me not as an altar wrought with bricks of<br>gold nor with lumps of Alybe,<br>nor should you let the one which the Cynthus-born generation built,<br>taking horns of bleaters<br>such as pasture around the<br>smooth ridges of Cynthus,<br>be matched equally to me.<br>For with the offspring of Sky<br>the earth-born Nine built me,<br>whose immortal <i>techne</i> the<br>ruler of the immortals granted.<br>And you, drinking from the spring<br>which the son of the Gorgon struck, may<br>you sacrifice and pour a libation on me,<br>an offering much more sweet than the satiety of<br>Hymettian bees. Indeed, come with courageous heart<br>to my attainment, for I am pure of<br>the poison of threatening monsters, like those the altar near Thracian<br>Neae concealed, the one nearby Myrina, which the thief of the<br>purple ram dedicated to you, thrice-fathered Athena. | 5<br>10<br>15<br>20<br>25 |
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### 3. Birth Pangs: The Labor of Creation

Even this brief survey illustrates that each of these shaped poems is marked by sophisticated allusions, innovative metrical schemes, and new versions of old stories, all characteristics we customarily deem “typically Hellenistic” – as I will detail below.<sup>16</sup> But first I want to focus on the relationship of the poems’ content and metrics to their striking shapes. And to do so is to follow the directive of their authors, who, acutely aware of their innovative mode, pointedly direct our attention to their ingenuity with emphasis on the labor of their craftsmanship, playing at every turn with associations between poetic, literary craftsmanship on one hand, and material, artisanal construction on the other. In turn, our authors also demand the enactment of a complex set of labors on the part of the viewing audience, as we shall go on to interrogate.

The *topos* of creation pervades the corpus. In *Wings*, we learn of Eros’ “true” creation story and of his creation, in turn, of Acmon’s proper place and of divine laws for the gods. So, too, Epeius’ axe was the instrument which enabled him to construct the ultimately *destructive* Trojan horse; the *Syrinx* opens with Penelope’s birth of Pan; Besantinus’ *Altar* tells of its creation by the nine Muses; or, in the *Egg*, we read of the Dorian nightingale’s labor to produce her egg. This last example is perhaps most overt as a metapoetic commentary on Dorian Simias’ genesis of a new literary-visual genre and this poem within it, an equivalency the poem’s shape makes literal.<sup>17</sup> As such, it is a helpful directive for how to interpret in general the repeated moments of labor and production throughout the corpus, namely, as underscoring the effort required to produce a poem of this type and the innovation and ingenuity attending such a creative impulse.

I read the vocabulary of materiality common to these poems from a similar perspective, that is, as intentionally underscoring their careful craftsmanship: the firmament that yields to the winged Eros is bronze (χάλκεος οὐρανός, 11); the syrinx is itself a constructed instrument and imports all the connotations of a sacred material object as an *agalma* (παῖξεν, ἄγαλμα, 7, 8);<sup>18</sup> Dosiadas’ *Altar* refers to itself as something built

16 For the general qualities of Hellenistic poetry, see, e.g., Bing 1988; Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004; Gutzwiller 2007.

17 For the poetic associations of nightingales from the Archaic to Hellenistic periods, see Steiner 2007.

18 As Furley (2010: 160) observes (with reference to Keesling 2003: 10), early in the Greek tradition, *agalmata* could refer to anything exalting or conferring honor on a deity, but by the fifth century an *agalma* had come to connote a cult statue specifically. Following the work of van Straten 1981: 78–104, Furley states of the *agalma*, “Typically, it referred to an artefact or work of art of above average quality

(τεῦξε, τεῦγμα, 3, 9) and describes the labor involved in Hephaestus' manufacture of the bronze Talus (μόρησε, γυιόχαλκον, 8, 6); and the altar in Besantinus' poem is the product of material manufacture (παγέντα, ἔτευξε, 7, 15), although it is not wrought of silver or gold.<sup>19</sup> As with the *Egg*, this last *Altar* poem offers another metapoetic claim which we can apply to the instances of materiality throughout the corpus – the construction of the altar attended by the Muses and their immortal *techne* (τέχνην, 16) brings into focus Besantinus' own construction of the altar poem and his *techne* in doing so.<sup>20</sup> By emphasizing the products and materials of labor and craftsmanship, this ekphrastic language underscores in a literary-critical turn that these poems and their authors have gone one step further than the poets of contemporary ekphrastic epigrams who merely refer to absent objects: *these* authors have worked to offer the reader crafted, manufactured images that evoke three-dimensional objects, and so emphasize their play at reinserting the object, now present through its two-dimensional representation.<sup>21</sup>

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and monetary value which the worshipper gave to the deity in the hope that it would be found pleasing". See Day 2010: 85–129 for detailed discussion of the word's poetic and subsequent material connotations in the Archaic and Classical periods. As he shows, *agalma* is first used in the poetic tradition and brings that literary association into an epigraphic context: in poetry, "*agalma* described a fine, beautiful object of high craftsmanship, often translated 'ornament', one that generates pleasure and thereby mediates friendly relationships, especially in ceremonies. Analysis of the contexts of *agalma* in epigrams demonstrates that the word's epigraphic meaning mirrors its traditional poetic one, and that readers would be guided to that concept" (p. 86). In a neat circular turn, the material qualities that this word brings to the *Syrinx* have a long and rich history that originates in literary poetry.

- 19 Of course, the very writtenness of the poems themselves is a fundamental element of their materiality: "Figure writings, acrostics, and palindromes share with board games, metrical play, and the like an insistence on the users' recognition of the arbitrariness of writing practices and the materiality of their own perceptual processes. Although they communicate symbolically (i.e., transmit meaning), they do so only by calling attention to the nonsymbolic, embodied aspects of writing, reading, and playing" (Habinek 2009: 127). We also note, along with Bing 1998; 2002, the easy slippage between the literary and the material for the genre of epigram in particular – in many cases it remains impossible to determine whether a Hellenistic epigram was composed for stone or scroll.
- 20 Indeed, the acrostic itself helps drive this point home, since as Garulli (this volume) and Mairs (this volume) demonstrate, in addition to being literary phenomena, acrostics were inscribed widely across the ancient world from as early as the second century BC. This kind of word play imports both literary and material connotations.
- 21 For the play of presence and absence in Hellenistic ekphrastic epigram in general, see Gutzwiller 2002; Männlein-Robert 2007a. In my view, the contrast wrought by



Ultimately, though, this insistent attention to the poems' unique appearance only highlights the irreconcilable gap between representation and reality, *mimesis* and *aletheia*, and further calls attention to what is absent, namely the three-dimensional object evoked verbally and visually.<sup>22</sup> Despite tantalizing authorial teases that momentarily suggest otherwise, the incontrovertible medial disconnect never allows the reading, viewing audience to align text with image or image with text fully. By various complex machinations, then, these poems require the audience to consider them from both literary and art historical aesthetic perspectives, and they engage such critical reflection by manipulating the very moments of their reading as inextricable from their moments of viewing. As I now go on to investigate, from the moment when the audience necessarily engages these poems on literary and visual levels simultaneously, it, too, must labor – in particular in its navigation between content and form – and joins in a power play with the authors and the texts that is destabilizing at each turn.

#### 4. Growing Pains: The Labor of Viewing

If at first the presentation of the poem's shape on the page seems a helpful hint for accessing its content, the reader soon learns that the relationship between poetic form and content can be unstable and fraught with interpre-

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this conventional literary epigrammatic tension between what is present and what is absent is all the more pronounced by the inclusion of the image. The contrast is also made literal in the case of the shaped poems, since the image of the object is necessarily defined on the page by the negative, blank space around the lines; thus absence (of image or words) literally creates presence (of image with words). If, as Bing (1998: 38) has it, a "reading" of inscribed epigram comprises not just the text but its physical context – the object on which it is engraved, its geographical setting, its socio-historical circumstances, etc. – whereas on papyrus that context is eliminated, it is productive to consider how the *technopaegnia* bridge the gap between the two, intentionally importing the connotations of the physical onto the page.

- 22 My views here align closely with Bing 1998: 35: when an audience encounters a literary epigram on a scroll, "its formal resemblance to the inscribed variety prompts readers to experience the poem's context as at least partly a *lack* of context. The lack elicits a response, which is to use imagination to fill out the picture. In instances when an epigram migrates from one medium into another, the audience's memory also plays a role: What it knows of contextual history will condition its response" (emphasis original). This open-endedness invites the audience's creative play, or *Ergänzungsspiel*, which applies to the *technopaegnia* as well. For the notion that Archaic and Classical poets tended to equate representation with reality, while Hellenistic authors more critically probed the "conflict" between the two, see Tueller 2008: 155–193.

tive pitfalls. But the poems insist variously that the reader consider their appearance and thus they enforce a troubled reading. In some instances, the poems call attention to their shapes by directing the audience's gaze literally: at the outset, *Wings* bids the reader to "gaze upon me", and not to break that gaze (λεῦσσε μέ), while Besantinus' poem narrates the details of its viewing to a singular addressee (ὀρῆς με, 7); the opening of the *Egg* focuses our view with its self-referential "Here it is; accept it" (τῇ τόδε ... δέξο);<sup>23</sup> the polyvalent deictics in the *Axe* (ὅδε, 6) and the *Syrinx* (τόδε, 11) point, at least in part, to the shape confronting the reader on the page;<sup>24</sup> or, in the *Syrinx*'s paradoxical concluding line, the single word νηλεύστω, "invisible", is necessary for making visible the complete image of Pan's instrument.<sup>25</sup> These linguistic directives focus the reader's gaze and suggest that the image as a whole is essential to the reader's line-by-line investigation of its contents.<sup>26</sup> But it would be misleading to take these poems' shapes at face value, that is, as early and helpful clues for decoding their contents, since in some instances to read is to deconstruct the image itself, and in others to read is to be implicated in a moment of vulnerable viewing.

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- 23 Prier (1994: 89) makes a similar observation: "The poet thrusts 'Egg' before our objectifying focus". Note, too, that the imperatives in the *technopaegnia* bring another level of complexity to the poems: when the addressee of inscribed dedicatory epigrams from 700–300 BC is clear, it is overwhelmingly the divinity receiving the object, rather than, say, the passerby (Tueller 2008: 28–29; 56). The imperatives throughout the shaped poems, on the other, hand, tend to address the reader/viewer, which is a feature rather of inscribed sepulchral epigram, or to leave the object of address unclear. We may consider this part of the new trend of using sepulchral conventions in dedicatory epigram, c. 300, which Tueller (2008: 95–103) identifies in the poetry of Moero, Anyte, and others. In such literary epigrams in which the identity of the addressee is a key ambiguity, including several of the *technopaegnia*, we may identify a common locus of in-vogue playfulness.
- 24 Obbink (2005: 112) observes that deictics in Hellenistic epigram "insinuate the impression of occasionality"; Papalexandrou (2003: 251) asserts of deictics in Posidippus' *Hippika*: "Inherent in this explicit gesture of verbal *deixis* is the latent message that the communicative efficacy of the monument depends on the simultaneous viewing of image and poetry, of the visual and the aural". Thus the deictics in the *technopaegnia* bring to the reader's awareness the four-dimensional context (including time as the fourth dimension) that s/he would navigate regularly, whether in a sanctuary or other setting for inscribed material objects, and so import to the page the complex nexus of communicative modes.
- 25 Perhaps the poems also take on the long history of the riddle type requiring the identification of what one has seen. Such "I saw" riddles are a common convention of Vedic, Greek, Persian, Germanic, and Slavonic traditions, in which the viewer's perception of an object is at the heart of the riddle's obfuscation and solution (West 2007: 366–367).
- 26 For the view of the shape as a helpful initial hint about the rest of the poem, see, e.g. Luz 2010: 351.

The instability of the images in Simias' *Egg* and *Axe* poems stems from their literal disintegration brought on by the process of reading.<sup>27</sup> In order to make semantic sense of these poems, the audience must reassemble the lines pair by metrical pair, effectively unmaking cohesive visual sense as it works against the order of the image to place the lines in semantic order – to read the dedication of the object the representation of that very object must be undone. Meter, now exploited to visual, rather than strictly aural or generic ends, is integral to this modal conflict:<sup>28</sup> the metrical variation of Simias' lines is at once the primary defining feature of his poems' shaped contours as well as the cipher by which the reader deconstructs the poem's image in order to rehabilitate its semantic sense. Moreover, this agonistic exchange is additionally charged if, leaving the image intact, one reads either poem aloud in the order of its shape. Since the result is not merely a nonsensical poem, but specifically a frustrated speech-act and a frustrated acoustical experience, the audience confronts this literal disconnect between visual and verbal media.<sup>29</sup> There is simply no way around it: if we view the poem's image as a whole, we cannot properly understand its contents, and if we reconstruct the image to make sense of its contents, we damage its visual communication. The *Axe* and *Egg*, then, require laborious and repeated visual and verbal mediation, an effort that calls to mind what is required to compose such mixed-media presentations. Throughout these labors, the author can never have been far from the mind of the reader.<sup>30</sup>

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- 27 Männlein-Robert (2007b: 142–150) and Luz (2008) develop this point with particular focus on Simias' *Egg*. An analogue might be found in the very nature of Hermes, the central divinity in the *Egg*: “Non c'è niente, in lui, di fisso, di stabile, di permanente, di circoscritto, né di chiuso. Egli rappresenta, nello spazio e nel mondo umano, il movimento, il passaggio, il mutamento di stato, la transizione, i contatti tra elementi estranei...” (Bevilacqua 2009: 231, following Vernant).
- 28 Prier (1994: 85 n. 7) observes the phenomenon as well: “...meter in the ‘Egg’ has undergone an intentional, concrete materialization”.
- 29 Pérez López (2002: 175–176) likewise identifies in the poems the passage from something oral and acoustic to something pictorial/visual, although I would maintain that such a “passage” is not totally clear-cut, and intentionally so: this way, the audience must confront the medial fracture straight on. See also Naerebout and Beerden in this volume for the emphasis on the essentially oral aspects of ancient Greek riddles; from this perspective, we note how the riddling *technopaegnia* also complicate the spoken and the written, referencing both the association of riddles with oral divination as well as their expression in the literary epigrammatic tradition.
- 30 Habinek (2009: 136) puts forth a similar argument for the Roman world: “Viewed synchronically, especially in its relationship to speaking, Roman writing helps to confer agency upon the writer, to differentiate him or her from others, as master from slave, and to expand the literate ego beyond the confines of the here and now

If the very shapes of the *technopaegnia* can be destabilized by the audience's reading, the poems have the complementary power to destabilize the audience in the act of reading. A poem may seem to offer a familiar initial image only to subvert those viewing expectations within the body of the poem, as in the case of Simias' *Wings*.<sup>31</sup> Taking its cue from the image of wings spread in flight, the Hellenistic audience would likely have imagined a childlike Eros, offspring of Aphrodite and Ares, as was the vogue for contemporary literary and material depictions of the divinity.<sup>32</sup> But this assumption is checked by Eros' description of himself in line 2 as having hairy cheeks heavy with beard (δάσκια βέβριθα λάχνα γένεια) and as the offspring of Chaos (Χάους δέ, 7). Here, as elsewhere, the acts of viewing the image and reading its contents are neither clearly distinct nor clearly reciprocal; both require labor and careful consideration of their intermedial relationship. This is true, too, for the audience of Dosiadas' *Altar*, where to look is to be in danger and the epiphany comes too late. Once the reader unscrambles its riddles to derive the identity of the monument, s/he casts an eye upon the very altar that caused Philoctetes harm when it was the object of his gaze (ἄθρήσας, 9). The reader, like Philoctetes, is thus made into the vulnerable viewer. Indeed, the subsequent arrangement of the *technopaegnia* in the *Greek Anthology* seems further to dramatize this

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of speech production. At the same time, in separating writing from its connection with speech, using it to defamiliarize processes of visual and auditory perceptions, at least some Romans expose the materiality of the word, its groundedness in the realm of the phenomenal".

- 31 Even in ostensibly more straightforward cases such as the *Syrinx*, in which the shape of the poem works in productive tension with its contents and ultimately helps point to Pan as its subject, the reader must decipher early on who its subject is *not* (line 3), rendering the assistance of the shape temporarily ineffective. We see this attention to what the object is not or who its subject is not in both *Altar* poems as well.
- 32 Examples of the young Eros are manifold, from the Archaic literary tradition, e.g. Alc. fr. 58 *PMG* where Eros "plays like a little child", to the Hellenistic epigrams of *Anth. Plan.* where Eros is repeatedly addressed as νήπιε (e.g., 196–197), or the episode in Apollonius' *Argonautica* where Aphrodite catches the child cheating at a game of dice, his cheeks here noted for a sweet blush rather than Simias' hairy appearance (3.121–122). Later, Aphrodite promises him Zeus' ball with which to play and he reacts gleefully and childishly (146–150). The visual record preserves the same characterization of a youthful Eros, attested by the numerous Hellenistic sculptures depicting him as a chubby, cheerful child. One well-known example is the "slipper-slapper" marble group from Delos featuring Aphrodite, Pan, and Eros, where a miniature winged Eros hovers over the shoulder of his mother and smiling, grabs one of Pan's horns (Athens NM).

moment of dangerous viewing with its ordering of the two *Altar* poems.<sup>33</sup> Besantinus' poem comes first, so that the reader of these collected poems in book form initially encounters his altar with its associations with peace (1–6) and the Muses (14–17), and its concluding bid to the passer-by to approach it boldly since it is a safe place, unlike that other altar in Thrace, locus of monsters (22–26). Of course, we see that very Thracian altar with its proven threats when we move to the next poem, the *Altar* of Dosiadas. Thus, to read these poems and to view their shapes is to be implicated in the power play between author and audience, between text and image and to navigate those shifting hierarchies by confronting intermedial exchanges in which content and form are at once inextricably bound and irresolutely disconnected.<sup>34</sup>

I conclude this survey of the work required of the reader by observing how the *technopaegnia* interrogate the culturally-informed viewing expectations of their audience. Jeremy Tanner has recently explored how Greek art in the Hellenistic period was regularly extracted from its original context of display, often religious, and reappropriated in new secular contexts, speaking to the power of the kings and elites in the newly expanded Hellenistic kingdoms rather than strictly to the deities once served.<sup>35</sup> From this perspective, we might situate the *technopaegnia* as part of the Hellenistic vogue of creating new contexts for displaying and viewing newly collected art objects – whether this context is exclusively secular or not is a matter to which I return. With characteristic ingenuity, the poets of the *technopaegnia* complicate this process by framing and contextualizing the images they create with the margins of the page rather than the halls of a Ptolemaic palace, the columns of a temple, or the boundary of a *temenos*.<sup>36</sup> If Hellenistic poetry books are “a way for the characteristics of brevity and conciseness to rival ... the characteristics of length ... that were associated with

33 For the hands involved in the compilation of *Anth. Pal.* 15 and debate about their dates, see Cameron 1993: 298–328.

34 It is tempting to imagine similar play at work in Simias' fragmentary *Gorgo*, which, although not a calligram and desperately fragmentary, could have toyed with the dangers of seeing and being seen with reference to the legendary gaze of its title character. See Di Gregorio 2008: 98–106.

35 Tanner 2006: 205–276. See also the study by Coppola (2010) of the removal, return, or re-use of Greek statues by the Romans, and how such acts communicate cultural ideologies. It is worth considering whether the *technopaegnia* likewise engage such dynamics of cultural exchange.

36 I observe the neat inversion on the *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina*, where the carved and inscribed pilasters organize the text and the images in a way reminiscent of papyrus columns or page margins. See Squire 2010a: 82–84 for further discussion of the *Tabulae* in the context of the *technopaegnia*.

higher-status [literary] forms”,<sup>37</sup> this succinct, shaped book poetry likewise rivals the much larger three-dimensional objects whose display was a matter of elite cultural expression. Indeed, the *technopaegnia* as they are preserved in the *Greek Anthology*, for example, resemble a collection of sculpted objects on display, and it is as if their authors have heeded Posidippus’ epigrammatic call to “imitate these works, and pass by the archaic rules for making large sculpted images” rather literally.<sup>38</sup>

But if these poems are in dialogue with contemporary literary and material modes, they also actively engage the long historical trajectory of ekphrasis, epigram, and sculpted objects, in particular as they relate to the divine. In this regard, we should be hesitant to conclude, along with Tanner, that the Hellenistic impulse to recontextualize necessarily erases the connotations of the sacred. Indeed, the *technopaegnia* each significantly present and represent an object of religious ritual: The *Wings*, *Axe*, *Egg*, and *Syrinx* purport to append dedicatory votives, and the two *Altar* poems reproduce the physical place at which such dedications could be left in a relationship of divine exchange and worship. In this way, they support Verity Platt’s recent study of how “scholarship and ritual, or connoisseurship and veneration, were by no means mutually exclusive but often deeply implicated in each other” in the Hellenistic period.<sup>39</sup> Thus, just as the audience of these poems likely associated them with collected objects displayed in secular contexts, they would surely also have connected them to the viewing experience in a sanctuary or other sacred setting, where it was customary to encounter inscribed, crafted objects alongside other such objects, and to view and consider each in relation to those around it.<sup>40</sup> And

37 Gutzwiller 2007: 183.

38 Posidippus’ first poem in the *Andriantopoiika*, 62.1–2 Austin-Bastianini; Gutzwiller 2007: 203. If we connect this literary corpus to collections of inscribed objects, we may wish to see a parallel literary impulse in the assembled sections of Posidippus’ epigrams, with those on dedications (*Anathematika* (36–41) sharing a particular resemblance to the *technopaegnia*; Bing (1998: 36 n. 48) speculates similarly: “I wonder whether the section in the Milan Posidippus papyrus containing votive epigrams for a temple of Asclepius was meant to create the impression of just such a setting within the confines of a book”).

39 Platt 2010: 200.

40 See especially Day 2010: 26–84 for a detailed study of viewing inscribed Archaic dedicatory epigrams in a sanctuary or other “ritually significant place” and the conclusion that “the circumstances of encounters thus contributed to the emergence of a religious response to dedications” (p. 17). As Papalexandrou observes, “Some epigrams were composed as purely literary artifacts. Even in this case their consumption must have been conditioned by the original experiential determinatives of the genre” (2003: 249 n. 5). Papalexandrou and Kosmetatou (in the same volume) both offer studies based on the premise that to study Hellenistic epigrams is to take into account “the material culture that framed their original function as ob-

this is very nearly what the *technopaegnia* offer the reader, the illusion strengthened by their cross-referencing that asks us to read them in terms of one another (e.g., the *Syrinx* and Dosiadas' *Altar* or the two *Altar* poems), and by their tendency toward personification and the use of deictics, both common to inscribed three-dimensional objects – including votives – since the earliest Greek writing.<sup>41</sup> Just as the materiality of this shaped book poetry has as its analogue the three-dimensional settings of three-dimensional objects, we might analogize the time required for laboring through these poems to the time and observational powers necessary for engaging sculpted objects when circulating through the physical spaces they inhabited. Rather than occupy the public space of a religious sanctuary, of course, these poetic images are assembled on the pages of a poetry book for a rather more private and controlled viewership.<sup>42</sup> Thus, again, we observe the forced disconnect between what the reader/viewer expects, in this instance dictated by contemporary and past cultures of viewing, and what the reader/viewer actually confronts; *caveat lector*: what you see is not necessarily what you get. Such complicated viewing – an unavoidable component of reading these poems – creates a contest of hierarchies in which the reader must labor to navigate between representation and reality and in doing so ultimately relinquishes a fair measure of power.

We have witnessed the variety of ways the *technopaegnia* exert control over the reader, often through a refracting mimetic lens whose seeming transparency ultimately unsettles the relationship between illusion and truth. I now want to situate in their larger art historical context these games of the gaze – with their exploration of the boundaries between *mimesis* and *aletheia*, image and text, form and content, presence and absence. To do so is to stake a claim in the current scholarly debate about the birth of an independent, autonomous sphere of “art” in the Hellenistic period, to which I believe the *technopaegnia* can contribute. The essential issue at hand is whether Hellenistic literary and visual aesthetics should be viewed as an integral part of an Archaic and Classical Greek cultural continuum, or whether they indicate a distinct post-Platonic or post-Aristotelian rupture

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jects of perception” (Papalexandrou 2003: 250). Of considerable interest for my study, Bing (1998: 36) analyzes the audience’s experience of another set of Hellenistic literary epigrams, the ordering of which, he suggests, makes it “as though the dedications stood side by side in a precinct, rather than a text, and we the readers were touring a shrine, not perusing a book”.

- 41 See, e.g., van Straten 1981; Day 1994; 2007; 2010; Baumbach – Petrovic – Petrovic 2010; Trümper 2010.
- 42 See the excellent analysis by Elsner (2007 *passim*) of the literary viewing experiences in the later Greco-Roman world, and in particular their relationship to the divine, offered by Achilles Tatius, Pausanias, and Philostratus.

and should thus be assessed rather more on their own terms. With this in mind, I survey first the features of these poems that seem particularly to embody the Hellenistic aesthetic – whether literary or visual – and then consider them in their larger Greek context.<sup>43</sup>

## 5. Conclusion:

### The *technopaegnia* and the History of Art History<sup>44</sup>

Simon Goldhill's analysis of Hellenistic literary culture's "distinctive way of looking at things" has exerted a broad influence.<sup>45</sup> Since its initial publication, Goldhill himself recently reiterated that Hellenistic ekphrastic poems "discuss how to look as they do it. The poems dramatize the viewing subject seeing himself seeing".<sup>46</sup> As we have seen, the *technopaegnia* bear this out in several ways, and thus we could locate them as "typically Hellenistic".<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the ways the audience must puzzle through the intertwined and inextricable layers of reading, decipherment, and viewing bring to mind Theocritus' Gorgo and Praxinoa (*Id.* 15) or Herondas' Phile and Kynno (*Mime* 4), paragons of Hellenistic viewership.<sup>48</sup> Just as those female commentators (however naively) wrestle with the realism of the images in view, the audience of the *technopaegnia* is also implicated in a critical response to verisimilitude, held in productive tension between reality and representation.

In addition, just as the genre of literary epigram – with its brevity, innovation, and dramatization of unusual moments from familiar stories – embodies the Hellenistic literary aesthetic as laid out in the Prologue to Callimachus' *Aetia*, the *technopaegnia* embody that aesthetic in their inter-

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43 Scholars who advocate for rupture include Tanner (2006) and (Goldhill) 2007. Squire (2009) and Platt (2010), on the other hand, make a compelling case for continuity. See, too, the conclusions of Prier (1994) who alludes to, although does not develop the role of the *technopaegnia* in making the case for continuity.

44 See Squire 2010b (to which my section title nods) for the compelling call to rethink the relationship(s) of ancient "art" and "art history", which this essay aims to heed.

45 Goldhill 1994: 198.

46 Goldhill 2007: 2.

47 Di Gregorio's (2008: 71 and *passim*) repeated claims for Simias' poetry represent a common scholarly sentiment: "un prodotto tipico della poesia alessandrina".

48 For rather different ways of reading the critical responses of these women to the objects they view, compare Goldhill 2007 and Platt 2010.



twined literary and visual qualities.<sup>49</sup> Rather than create images of renowned objects like Myron's Cow or a sculpture by Lysippus, these authors offer views of objects that were not a regular part of the visual canon. And while some images are visual references to stories from the well-trodden literary tradition, they signify not the heroic versions or characters, but instead metonymically offer an innovative twist, as with Epeius, the now-heroic destroyer of Troy. His prominence here overtly contrasts the minor attention he receives from Homer and the role of lowly water-carrier of the Atridae assigned to him by Stesichorus and Simonides.<sup>50</sup> By importing that status into his *Axe* poem (νᾶμα κόμιζε δυσκλής, 6), Simias leverages the unheroic Archaic tradition of Epeius against his own poetic recasting of Epeius' prominence in bringing about the fall of Troy.<sup>51</sup> Thus, with rather cheeky irony, at the poem's conclusion Simias calls attention to his literary innovation by suggesting that despite Epeius' former low status, he now trods a "Homeric path" (Ὀμήρειον κέλευθον, 7).<sup>52</sup> And the double-axe shape of the poem, with all its connotations of Homer and his Bronze Age subjects, visually underscores this quintessentially Hellenistic conceit.<sup>53</sup>

49 See, e.g., Sens 2005: 222 for the aesthetic principles laid out in the *Aetia* prologue. Beyond shared general characteristics, one specific link can be made between the nightingale of the *Aetia* prologue and of Simias' *Egg* poem.

50 Stesichorus fr. 200 *PMG*; Athenaeus maintains that Simonides also characterized Epeius this way (10.456e–f). The Archaic poets are likely models for Lycophron, too, where Epeius is a coward afraid of the spear, born as a divine punishment to his parents (*Alex.* 943–945).

51 See, e.g., Bing 1988; Fantuzzi and Hunter 1994; Gutzwiller 2007.

52 This language of course brings to mind one major strand of the Hellenistic literary aesthetic as put forth by Callimachus in the prologue to the *Aetia* as well as in his epigrams, where he makes explicit the Hellenistic disdain for the well-trodden path of epic imitation: ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν, οὐδὲ κελεύθῳ | χαίρω τίς πολλοὺς ὧδε καὶ ὧδε φέρει (*Anth. Pal.* 12.43.1–2 = *Epigr.* 28 Pfeiffer). It is desirable to avoid the path of Homeric imitators whose epic poetry falls short of the standards set by Homer. Thus Simias inserts a certain amount of irony into the poem when he claims that it is a blessing from Athena that Epeius can now be considered in an epic context, since Hellenistic epigram rejects rote epic imitation and often rejects outright the tradition to which it refers. While this is no surprise on a literary level, Simias truly innovates by writing this literary aesthetic into the poem's materiality.

53 Sens (2005) observes how other Hellenistic riddling poems strip heroic epic figures of their status, their names, their *kleos*, by obfuscating their identity. While Epeius is explicitly named here and the riddle is one of visual metrics rather than semantics, this is a valid point for other *technopaegnia*, especially Dosiadas' *Altar*. Sens goes on to note that when heroes are clearly identified, the distinctly unheroic elements of their heroic stories are highlighted, which is precisely the case for Simias' *Axe*. Once again, the audience navigates a muddy reality as it searches

Nevertheless, the *technopaegnia* ultimately engage a more broadly continuous history of the literary and material arts and aesthetics than we might initially think, as they mediate at once past and contemporary literary practices alongside past and contemporary visual culture. This view diverges from established scholarly opinion:

The critical gaze, which is the sign of the art historian, finds its institutional origin [in Hellenistic epigram] ... It creates and regulates the viewing subject – both by a selection of what to look at and how to look – and by parallel exclusions, too. The epigram’s endemic concern for the discrete, pointed, witty surprise is part and parcel of what is known as Hellenistic aesthetics.<sup>54</sup>

In my view, the critical gaze is rather born out of mixed-media encounters that complicate verbal, visual, acoustic, temporal, and socio-cultural conventions. And such exchanges had been engaged by Greek poets and craftsmen alike since their earliest productions: among many others, we may list the classic Shield of Achilles ekphrasis in *Iliad* 18; the intermedial play of inscribed Archaic votives and sympotic pottery; or the critical response required of the audiences of Euripides, Agathon, and Callias, who each dramatized letters and words on the Classical Athenian stage.<sup>55</sup> Even this brief accounting illustrates the extent to which there was symbiotic play across ancient Greek media, and from their earliest expressions. I argue that the *technopaegnia* engage this long cultural dialogue by collapsing the conventional generic distinctions between word and image, by unsettling the acts of reading, seeing, and hearing, and by challenging the audience’s notions of literary and visual aesthetics and the circumstances of their intersection; we do better to analyze the critical gaze and the manipulation of its focus not in isolationist Hellenistic aesthetic terms, but rather as the method by which aesthetic mediation had long been exercised

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for the “truth” of stories and identities, here magnified by the additional element of the visual. For the Hellenistic un-heroicizing of the traditional heroes Jason, Amphytryon, and the Dioscuri, see Sens 2005: 212–213. For a detailed account of Simias’ response to Homer, see Di Gregorio 2008.

54 Goldhill 2007: 2.

55 See, e.g., Osborne and Pappas 2007; Pappas 2004; 2008; Squire 2009; Pappas 2011; Pappas 2012; Gagné Forthcoming. See also Butz 2010 for the aesthetics of the word-image exchanges of the Hekatompedon inscription. Bowie’s study of Archaic sympotic poetry (this volume) also makes clear that literary games requiring the labor and puzzlement of their audience have a clear precedent, while LeVen (this volume) illustrates how late-Classical audiences were conditioned to rely on the “logic of images” to make sense of obscure poetic language – an exercise the *technopaegnia* invite in one instance, only to complicate it in the next. To neglect the resonances of earlier literary and material experiences embodied by the *technopaegnia* is to miss the forest for the trees.

in ancient Greek culture.<sup>56</sup> And if the critical gaze is indeed the sign of the art historian, we see at least traces of such scholarship in the audience of epic poetry, the drinker at the symposium, and the spectator in the Theater of Dionysus, just as we more readily acknowledge in the consumer of Plato, Aristotle, or Hellenistic poetry.<sup>57</sup>

My aim here has been to illustrate how the *technopaegnia* consciously imitate, subvert, and literally re-shape established literary and material traditions from the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods alike. Far from being trivial word games or overwrought clever conceits, then, these “treacherous” shaped poems are a valuable critical discourse that offers entry into evolving ancient conceptions of literary and visual art, and art history.

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- 56 Of course, such critical mediation endures alongside and well after the production of these shaped poems. Although beyond the scope of the present study, it is also well worth considering the relationship of the *technopaegnia* to the subsequent development of Greco-Roman aesthetics. The challenges to disciplinary divides issued by the *Tabulae Iliacae* (e.g., Squire 2010a), the fourth-century AD grid poems of Optatian Porphyry (e.g., Levitan 1985), or the ekphrastic literary exercises of Achilles Tatius, Pausanias, and Philostratus (e.g., Elsner 2007) – to cite only a few – encourage further analysis of the trajectory forward of such word-image exchanges.
- 57 For a similar, although unelaborated, sentiment: Tueller 2008: 154, “...the writtenness of epigram had always called attention to itself, and may have in part inspired the literate play seen in Callimachus and his contemporaries. In noticing the unreliability of writing and its dependence on the reader, they may have been taking their cues, not from Plato’s *Phaedrus* so much as from an older source – inscribed epigrams going back to the archaic period”. And while Neer (2010) focuses rather on the continuity between Archaic and Classical Greek sculpture than has traditionally been allowed, I also see his assessment of the interaction of viewer and object in the Classical period – namely, the audience’s simultaneous perception of a manufactured material object and that object’s non-material representation – very much alive in the later *technopaegnia*.

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# Nicander's Aesopic Acrostic and Its Antidote<sup>\*</sup>

Michael B. Sullivan

Nicander is not a poet renowned for his wit. Writing in the shadow of his Alexandrian predecessors, the Colophonian seems at a glance to display much of the erudition, but little of the playful elegance associated with literature of that age.<sup>1</sup> Scarborough's assessment in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* is fairly (perhaps unfairly?) typical:

Nicander has little poetic talent; his efforts generally lack digressions, and in spite of some lofty subjects, there are woefully few similes and metaphors. His borrowing from Apollodorus indicates near-slavish dependence, and Nicander has little comprehension of the toxicology or zoology he carefully purloined. Yet as a grammarian and glossator, Nicander is among the most diligent of the Alexandrians in searching for puns, double meanings, and allusions in the Homeric epics...<sup>2</sup>

In Nicander, then (at least according to this view), we seem to have a classic case of Socratic *ἔρως* manifested through poetry; constantly chasing after what he himself lacked, the Colophonian devoted his scholarly activities to scouring and explicating the works of his more illustrious forebears.<sup>3</sup>

Or so the story goes. My goal in this paper is not to rehabilitate Nicander's reputation, although some recent criticism has emphasized his finer

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1 The length of this shadow is a matter of some debate. The *communis opinio* places the poet of the *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca* in the mid- to late second century BC, making him a rough contemporary of Moschus. For the most recent discussion with full bibliography, see Magnelli 2010: 211–213.

2 Scarborough 2003.

3 Pl. *Symp.* 199c–212c. On the general inadequacy of such a judgment, see Frye 1971: 3–9.

qualities.<sup>4</sup> Rather, building upon scholarship that explores the Colophonian's engagement with Archaic and Hellenistic poetry, I would like to demonstrate that, however we may assess Nicander's overall achievement, the poet displays remarkable wit and innovation in his adaptation of at least one poetic tradition – the Aesopic fable.<sup>5</sup> For by cleverly embedding his acrostic signature in the fable of the *διψάς* (an aetiology of human mortality) at *Ther.* 343–358, Nicander adapts the Aesopic tradition of coded speech (rooted in the Archaic Greek *αἶνος*) to his own peculiarly dense, scholarly aesthetic. In so doing, he not only ironically asserts his own immortality, but also aligns Aesopic content with Aesopic form in a particularly witty (and typically Hellenistic) innovation in the history of poetic wordplay.

Furthermore, this interpretation strongly supports Jacques' (2002: lxxi n. 162; lxxx n. 179; 2007: 25–26; 143–146) proposed emendations restoring the “defective” (Courtney 1990: 12) acrostic signature at *Alex.* 266–274, where the poet provides an antidote for the poisonous meadow-saffron (*τὸ ἐφήμερον*), a plant whose root possesses its own longstanding etymological and poetic connections with matters of death and immortality.<sup>6</sup> For whereas the fable at *Ther.* 343–358 traces human mortality back to Prometheus' theft of fire via the insatiable thirst caused by the deadly *διψάς*, the insatiable thirst caused by the deadly *ἐφήμερον* at *Alex.* 249–279 is cured by an antidote containing the very same fennel-stalk “which received the spoils of Prometheus' theft”.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the loss of immortality

4 See especially Jacques 2002: lx–lxix; xciv–ci; cxxviii–cxxix; Clauss 2006; Hatzimichali 2009: 29–33; Luz 2010: 16–19; Overduin 2010. Still, even Nicander's advocates acknowledge that his “topic is creepy, literally and figuratively” (Clauss 2006: 161), and “does not sit well with our perception of what constitutes art and literature” (Hatzimichali 2009: 39), despite the high esteem in which the poet was held in antiquity (e.g. Cic. *De or.* 1.69).

5 The mention of Nicander at Lucian, *Dips.* 9 suggests that the former's fable is technically Libyan and not Aesopic, but as West (1984: 114) notes, “there is no distinction to be drawn as regards content; Aesop and Libya are simply alternative labels”. Indeed, they are presented as functional equivalents by Aristotle (*Rh.* 2.1393a8) and Quintilian (5.11.19–20), and the encoding function of Libyan fables is explicitly highlighted by Dio Chrysostom (5.1–3). See Leigh 2000: 104 for further citations. In this paper I prefer the term “Aesopic” because by the end of the Classical period Aesop had “assimilated” or “attracted” virtually all forms of fable to his name (West 1984: 127–128), but one could just as easily use the more neutral and comprehensive term “fabular”. Cf. van Dijk 1997: 108–109. For Aesopic fables with Prometheus as protagonist, see e.g., *Aesop.* 100, 240, 259 Perry.

6 The masculine as opposed to the neuter substantive of course appears most famously at Pind. *Pyth.* 8.95–96: *ἐπάμερον τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὐ τις; σκιάς ὄναρ | ἄνθρωπος.*

7 Nic. *Alex.* 273: *ὅς τε Προμηθείοιο κλοπὴν ἀνεδέξατο φωρῆς.*



narrated in the *Theriaca* is symbolically counterbalanced by the restoration of health in the *Alexipharmaca*, and the “victory over man” etymologically implicit in the poet’s acrostic signature ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟΣ in the fable of the δῖψας is mirrored by “the victory of man” encoded in the scientific triumph of the meadow-saffron’s antidote.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as we shall see, the latter passage provides an antidote to the former in more ways than one.

## 1. Contextualizing Nicander's Fable

But before we proceed to Nicander’s acrostic signature in the *Theriaca* and its complement in the *Alexipharmaca*, a few words on the ancient fable and its function are in order. The most recent scholarly treatment of the Aesopic tradition, Kurke’s *Aesopic Conversations*, is founded on the premise that, “throughout the ancient world, Aesop and fable were consistently coded as both sociologically and generically low and abject”.<sup>9</sup> In many respects, Kurke’s approach to the Aesopic tradition in the fifth century BC revives Meuli’s thesis that fable’s essential function in antiquity was to provide a means for the weak (either by status or circumstance) to address the strong.<sup>10</sup> Such a view is attractive for many reasons, not least Aesop’s marked physical deformity, his servile status, and his repeated contestation of social, religious, and philosophical authorities in the *Life of Aesop* tradition. However, a truly diachronic examination of the ancient fable in all genres from Archaic Greece to Imperial Rome reveals that the lowliness of Aesopic discourse is accidental to its codedness.<sup>11</sup> Perry’s warning is still instructive:

It is true that fables have often been used as a diplomatic means of advising or supplicating or denouncing one’s superiors, or persons whom one must be careful not to offend by direct address; but whether they are so used or not depends upon the individual and the circumstances under which he tells or writes the fable. Meuli assumes that the use of fables in concrete social situations, as Aesop is said to have

8 On Nicander’s poetry as “a celebration of human knowledge”, see Claus 2006: esp. 181–182.

9 Kurke 2011: 48.

10 Meuli 1954.

11 This is not the place for a comprehensive review of Kurke’s book, which I find both stimulating and valuable, especially with regard to the connection she forges between the Aesopic tradition and “countercultural” prose projects in history and philosophy. However, I would simply note that any account of fable in the fifth century BC that relegates virtually all discussion of Old Comedy to the footnotes is ignoring at least one elephant in the room, so to speak. For sensitive critiques, see Ford 2011; Nagy 2011.

used them, and as Odysseus does in the *Odyssey*, must have preceded their use as a rhetorical device in the ordinary discourse of men with each other, whether oral or written. That, as it seems to me, is very improbable. I hold that fable, as a rhetorical manner of speaking, is closely analogous in nature to the proverb and the simile, and that the manner of its origin must, therefore, have been similar. As no one supposes that proverbs as such owe their origin to the requirements of a particular kind of social situation, rather than to the natural urge to say a thing effectively on *any* occasion, so likewise there is no need of any such assumption in accounting for the origin of fable. It must have come into use in the same way as the proverb or simile.<sup>12</sup>

This corrective is particularly apt within the learned context of Hellenistic poetry, where Aesopic fables are not used to address social superiors, but rather to encode the aesthetic polemics that characterize Alexandrian literature as a whole. There is nothing low or abject, for example, about Callimachus' fable of "The Fox, the Swan, and Zeus" from *Iamb* 2 (on which more below), the same poet's "Laurel, Olive, and Bramble" from *Iamb* 4, or the charming "Goat and Vine" and "Viper and Swallow" of the epigrammatists Leonidas of Tarentum and Antipater of Sidon, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Nor is there any hint of antipathy or social disparity between Nicander and Hermesianax, to whom the *Theriaca* is dedicated.<sup>14</sup> Rather, the aetiological fable of the *δυσάς* at *Ther.* 343–358 arises naturally from the poet's subject matter – namely the nature of venomous creatures and the wounds they inflict – instead of from any overriding social concerns. And so, if we are to understand both Nicander's fable and its embedded acrostic signature, we must first examine how Hellenistic poets received and transformed the Aesopic tradition from its earliest roots in the Archaic period.<sup>15</sup> In light of Nicander's generic and aesthetic affiliations, and because of the relevant passages' connections with Prometheus, it will be useful to chart this transformation by examining two exemplary fables from Hesiod and Callimachus, respectively.<sup>16</sup>

12 Perry 1959: 24–25.

13 Callim. *Ia.*, fr. 192 and 194 Pfeiffer; Leon. 32 Gow-Page (*Anth. Pal.* 9.99); Antip. Sid. 63 Gow-Page (*Anth. Pal.* 7.210). Glauthier (2009) well exemplifies the perils of applying the high vs low hermeneutic to fables in Hellenistic and Roman poetry.

14 Nic. *Ther.* 1–4: 'Ρεῖά κέ τοι μορφάς τε σῖνη τ' ὀλοφῶια θηρῶν | ἀπροῖδῃ τῶξαντα λύσιν θ' ἑτεραλκεία κήδευσ, | φύλ' Ἑρμησιάναζ, πολέων κυδίστατε παῶν, | ἔμπεδα φωνήσαιμι.

15 The standard account to the end of the Classical period remains West 1984. On the collection of Demetrius of Phalerum and its importance for shaping the Aesopic tradition in the Hellenistic period, see Perry 1962.

16 Relevant comparanda also include Ar. *Vesp.* 1446–1449 (for the encoding function of the fable, see 1251–1264) and Archil. fr. 172–181 West, among others.

The Archaic Greek term for fable is αἶνος, which the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* variously defines as “tale”, “story”, “fable”, “proverb”, “riddle”, “praise”, or “decree”, but even this wide array of possible translations fails to capture the concept entirely.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, modern scholars have offered increasingly refined definitions based on the appearance of such αἶνοι throughout Greek literature. Most convincing, to my mind, is Nagy's formulation that αἶνος designates “an allusive tale containing an ulterior purpose”, i.e., coded speech.<sup>18</sup> The first recognizably Aesopic fable in Archaic Greek poetry is, of course, the αἶνος of “The Hawk and the Nightingale” in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (202–212)<sup>19</sup>:

Νῦν δ' αἶνον βασιλεῦσιν ἐρέω φρονέουσι καὶ αὐτοῖς·  
 ᾧ δ' ἵρηξ προσέειπεν ἀηδόνα ποικιλόδειρον  
 ὕψι μάλ' ἐν νεφέεσσι φέρων ὀνύχεσσι μεμαρπώς·  
 ἦ δ' ἔλεόν, γναμπτοῖσι πεπαρμένη ἄμφ' ὀνύχεσσι, 205  
 μύρετο· τὴν ὃ γ' ἐπικρατέως πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν·  
 “δαμονίη, τί λέληκας; ἔχει νύ σε πολλὸν ἀρείων·  
 τῇ δ' εἷς ἦ σ' ἂν ἐγὼ περ ἄγω καὶ αἰοδὸν ἐοῦσαν·  
 δεῖπρον δ', αἶ κ' ἐθέλω, ποιήσομαι ἡὲ μεθήσω.  
 ἄφρον δ', ὅς κ' ἐθέλη πρὸς κρείσσονας ἀντιφερίζειν· 210  
 νίκης τε στέρεται πρὸς τ' αἵσχεσιν ἄλγεα πάσχει”.  
 ὧς ἔφατ' ὠκυπέτης ἵρηξ, τανυσίπτερος ὄρνις.

Now I shall tell a fable for kings – those who are aware:  
 So spoke the hawk to the spot-necked nightingale  
 as he bore her, gripped in his talons, high up among the clouds,  
 and she, pierced by his crooked talons, cried out 205  
 for mercy. And to her he haughtily spoke this speech:  
 “Strange creature, why do you cry? One far stronger has you now,  
 and you must go wherever I take you, singer that you are.  
 And I'll make you my meal, if I wish, or I'll let you go.  
 It is a foolish creature, who tries to oppose the stronger, 210  
 for it is robbed of victory, and suffers shame and pains”.  
 So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the bird swift of wing.

17 LSJ s.v. αἶνος.

18 Nagy 1999: 237. Cf. Nagy 1990a: 426–428, and for further support see van Dijk 1997: 80 n. 5.

19 Although Aesop is of course not mentioned by name, note that Hesiod's fable was considered Aesopic by later authors, e.g. Philostr. *Imag.* 1.3.1: φοιτῶσιν οἱ Μῦθοι παρὰ τὸν Αἰώπων ἀγαπῶντες αὐτόν, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐπιμελεῖται. ἐμέλησε μὲν γὰρ καὶ Ὀμήρῳ μύθου καὶ Ἡσιόδῳ, ἔτι δὲ καὶ Ἀρχιλόχῳ πρὸς Λυκάμβην, ἀλλ' Αἰσώπῳ πάντα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκμεμύθωται, καὶ λόγου τοῖς θηρίοις μεταδέδωκε λόγου ἔνεκεν. Thus “The Hawk and the Nightingale” is synchronically Hesiodic, but diachronically Aesopic. Cf. van Dijk 1997: 46 and n. 5 above. All translations are my own.

Here, Hesiod's αἶνος at *Op.* 202 encodes the hawk's μῦθος at *Op.* 206 for the benefit of those kings who are sufficiently "aware" to understand the poet's message. For as Daly (1961: 49) observes, this fable appears between "the description of the men of the iron age, who respect the man of violence and take justice into their own hands (*Op.* 180–201)", and "the address to Perses (*Op.* 213–247) and to the kings (*Op.* 248–273)", whom he conversely enjoins to shun violence and respect justice (Δίκη). The crucial passage for understanding what Daly terms the fable's "lesson" occurs after Hesiod's two apostrophes (*Op.* 270–281):

- |                                                                |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| νῦν δὴ ἐγὼ μήτ' αὐτὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποισι δίκαιος                    | 270 |
| εἶην μήτ' ἐμὸς υἱός, ἐπεὶ κακὸν ἄνδρα δίκαιον                  |     |
| ἔμμεναι, εἰ μείζω γε δίκην ἀδικώτερος ἔξει.                    |     |
| ἀλλὰ τὰ γ' οὐπω ἔολπα τελεῖν Δία μητιόεντα.                    |     |
| ὦ Πέρση, σὺ δὲ ταῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι                    |     |
| καὶ νῦ δίκης ἐπάκουε, βίης δ' ἐπιλήθεο πάμπαν.                 | 275 |
| τόνδε γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νόμον διέταξε Κρονίων,                    |     |
| ἰχθύσι μὲν καὶ θηρσὶ καὶ οἰωνοῖς πετεηνοῖς                     |     |
| ἔσθειν ἀλλήλους, ἐπεὶ οὐ δίκη ἐστὶ μετ' αὐτοῖς·                |     |
| ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἔδωκε δίκην, ἥ πολλὸν ἀρίστη                     |     |
| γίνεται· εἰ γάρ τις κ' ἐθέλῃ τὰ δίκαι' ἀγορεύσαι               | 280 |
| γινώσκων, τῷ μὲν τ' ὄλβον διδοὶ εὐρύσπεα Ζεὺς.                 |     |
| Indeed, now may neither I nor my son be just among             | 270 |
| men – for if the unjust man shall possess the greater right,   |     |
| it is an evil thing for a man to be just. But I                |     |
| do not think that all-wise Zeus will bring that to pass.       |     |
| But you, Perses, lay up these things within your mind and heed |     |
| justice, and leave all forms of violence behind. For the son   | 275 |
| of Kronos has laid down this law for mankind, that it is       |     |
| for the fish and the beasts and the winged birds to devour     |     |
| one another, because there is no justice among them;           |     |
| but to mankind he gave justice, which is by far the best;      |     |
| for if anyone knows what's right and wants to announce it,     | 280 |
| to him far-seeing Zeus gives a true state of blessedness.      |     |

Here, Hesiod argues that while it is the practice of "the fish and the beasts and the winged birds to devour one another", Zeus' gift of justice to mankind allows us to restrain our violent tendencies, and thereby achieve "a true state of blessedness". For Daly (1961: 50), the poet's inclusion of "the winged birds" in the catalogue of animals at *Op.* 277 is the key to interpreting Hesiod's αἶνος at *Op.* 202–212, which he concludes is nothing more than "an illustration of the ruthless exercise of might" that should be avoided by all good kings. However, the hawk's assertion at *Op.* 208 that the nightingale "must go wherever I take you, singer that you are" suggests that Hesiod's fable encodes a much more specific message about the relationship between poets and kings.

Indeed, Hesiod's own position closely mirrors that of the nightingale; as a "singer" (ᾄδιδός) who presumes to offer advice to kings on how to conduct themselves, he effectively plays the role of "a foolish creature, who tries to oppose the stronger", and therefore risks being "robbed of victory, and suffer[ing] shame and pains" at the hands of more powerful men. However, those kings "who are aware" enough to understand his αἶνος will appreciate the spirit in which his advice is offered, and treat him with the justice sanctioned by Zeus rather than the violence exhibited by the hawk.<sup>20</sup> The personal relevance of this message is reinforced by *Op.* 270–273, where the poet hopes that "neither I nor my son be just among men – for if the unjust man shall possess the greater right, it is an evil thing for a man to be just". Again, Hesiod explicitly links injustice with the indiscriminate use of violence, from which he distances both himself and his progeny. When it comes to the exercise of power, the poet would prefer to suffer the fate of the righteous nightingale than emulate the unjust hawk. Thus, while Daly is correct to note that Hesiod's fable provides "an illustration of the ruthless exercise of might", the αἶνος more specifically encodes a personal message about how the ideal relationship between poet and king should be conducted. As such, it not only conveys the poet's advice to his social superiors with aplomb, but also obliquely asserts the vatic authority of the ᾄδιδός against the temporal authority of the βασιλεῖς.<sup>21</sup>

In the hands of a Hellenistic poet like Callimachus, this Archaic tradition of coded speech becomes a powerful vehicle for literary criticism. In his second *Iamb*, for instance, the poet employs the fable of "The Fox, the Swan, and Zeus" to explain human loquacity and condemn poetic logorrhea among his pseudonymous contemporaries Eudemos and Philton, along with tragedians in general (Callim. *Ia.*, fr. 192 Pfeiffer = *Aesop.* 431 Perry):

Ἦν κείνος οὐνιαυτός, ᾧ τό τε πτηνὸν  
καὶ τοῦν θαλάσση καὶ τὸ τετράπουν αὐτῶς  
ἐφθέγγεθ' ὥς ὁ πηλὸς ὁ Προμήθειος

τὰπὶ Κρόνου τε καὶ ἔτι τὰ πρὸ τη[  
λ..ουσα καὶ κως [. ]ν σ[.]νημεναισ[  
δίκαιος ὁ [Ζε]ύς, οὐ δίκαι[α] δ' αἰσυμνέων  
τῶν ἐρπετῶν [μ]ὲν ἐξέκοψε τὸ φθέ[γμα,

5

20 Compare the participle φρονέουσι at *Op.* 202 with the φρεσί at *Op.* 274. On the link between cognition and αἶνοι see again Nagy 1999: 237.

21 For more on the connection between avian imagery and poetic authority generally, see Steiner 2007. Hubbard (1995), Nelson (1997), and Mordine (2006) offer alternative interpretations of the fable's message, but likewise treat αἶνος as code. Lonsdale (1989) treats the fable as an omen, essentially a religious form of code.

γένος δὲ τ.υτ.[.]ρον – ὥσπερ οὐ κάρτ[ος  
 ἡμέων ἐχόντων χητέροις ἀπάρξασθαι –  
 ...]ψ ἐς ἀνδρῶν· καὶ κυνὸς [μ]ἐ[ν] Εὐδήμος, 10  
 ὄνου δὲ Φύλων, ψιττακοῦ δὲ[  
 οἱ δὲ τραγοῖ τῶν θάλασσαν οἰ[κεύων  
 ἔχο[υ]σι φωνήν· οἱ δὲ πάντες [ἄνθρωποι  
 καὶ πουλύμυθοι καὶ λάλοι πεφ[ύκασιν  
 ἐκεῖθεν, ὡνδρόνικε· ταῦτα δ' Αἴσωπος 15  
 ὁ Σαρδιηνὸς εἶπεν, ὅτιν' οἱ Δελφοὶ  
 ἄδοντα μῦθον οὐ καλῶς ἐδέξαντο.

It was a time when creatures of the air  
 and sea and the four-footed animals  
 talked the same way as Promethian clay

...  
 in the time of Kronos, and even before...  
 just is Zeus, but unjust was his ruling 5  
 when he deprived the creepers of their speech  
 and – as though we couldn't spare a portion  
 of our voice for others – [diverted] it  
 to man. And so Eudemos has a dog's  
 voice, Philton a donkey's, [???] a parrot's, 10  
 and tragedians that of sea-dwellers;  
 thus, Andronikos, all men are wordy  
 and babblers by nature; so said Aesop  
 of Sardis, whom the Delphians did not  
 receive well, when he told his fable. 15

In its concise summary of this *Iamb*, the anonymous *Diegesis* of Callimachus usefully supplies an outline of the fable lost in the approximately seventeen-verse lacuna after line three (*Dieg.* 6.22–29 *ad* Callim. fr. 192.1 Pfeiffer):

Τᾶλλ[α] ζῶα ὁμοφώνει ἀν[θ]ρώποις, μέχρι κατὰ λύσιν γήρως ἐπ[ι]ρ[έ]σβευσεν ὁ  
 κύκνος πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ ἀλώπηξ τὸν Δία ἐτόλμησεν μὴ δικαίως ἄρχειν φάναι.  
 ἔκτοτε δὲ εἰς ἀνθρώπους μετήνεγκεν αὐτῶν τὴν φωνήν, καὶ λάλοι ἐγένοντο.

The other animals shared speech with humans, until the swan approached the gods  
 about abolishing old age, and the fox dared to say that Zeus was not ruling justly.  
 From that time, he transferred their speech to humans, and they became babblers.

In and of itself, this fable (here termed μῦθος) explaining why human beings talk so much is entirely consistent with Callimachus' famous penchant for aetiology; however, the poet also cleverly uses it to encode a pseudonymous *ad hominem* literary polemic.<sup>22</sup> For if human beings have been giv-

22 The dynamics of the terminological shift from αἶνος to μῦθος (with λόγος intervening) to designate the Aesopic fable are complex, and cannot be readily summarized in this context. For discussions of the problem, see van Dijk 1997: 79–110. Kurke 2011: 39–40; 282–288, but supplemented by the contribution of Ford 2002: 72–89

en the animals' speech, Callimachus asserts, then it follows that his poetic rivals have inherited some decidedly unflattering voices. Thus Eudemos (whose very name suggests the sort of popular poetry scorned by Callimachus) barks like a dog, Philton brays like ass, and tragedians in general are as incomprehensible as fish. And so, like Hesiod before him, the Alexandrian poet employs the Aesopic tradition to encode contentious messages; but whereas the former uses the αἶνος of "The Hawk and the Nightingale" to offer a delicate piece of advice and obliquely assert his poetic authority, Callimachus uses the Aesopic μῦθος of "The Fox, the Swan, and Zeus" to advocate his own learned, fine-spun aesthetic while simultaneously launching a veiled attack against his sloppy, longwinded, and notably pseudonymous competitors.

## 2. Nicander's Aesopic Acrostic

Which brings us, finally, to Nicander. In a pun- and kenning-infused passage at *Ther.* 343–358, the poet relates the fable (here, as in Callimachus, termed μῦθος) of how, after receiving eternal youth from Zeus for informing on Prometheus' theft of fire, mankind foolishly entrusted the precious gift (γέρας) to an ass, who traded it to the snake called διψάς for a drink of water. Previously related by Sophocles, Dinolochus, Ibycus, Aristias, and Apollonphanes, the fable thus provides aetiologies for mankind's mortality, the snake's ability to slough its skin/age (γῆρας), and the deadly thirst (δίψη) caused by that species' venom.<sup>23</sup> I reproduce Jacques' text, with the acrostic signature in boldface:

|                                                     |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| ὦγύγιος δ' ἄρα μῦθος ἐν αἰζηοῖσι φορεῖται,          |     |
| ὥς, ὅπότε' οὐρανὸν ἔσχε Κρόνου πρεσβίστατον αἶμα,   |     |
| <b>Ν</b> ειμάμενος κασίεσσιν ἐκάς περικυδέας ἀρχὰς  | 345 |
| <b>Ι</b> δμοσύνη, νεότητα γέρας πόρεν ἡμερίοισι     |     |
| <b>Κ</b> υδαίνων· δὴ γάρ ῥα πυρὸς λήϊστορ' ἔνιπτον. |     |
| <b>Α</b> φρονες· οὐ γὰρ τῆς γε κακοφραδῆς ἀπόνηντο. |     |
| <b>Ν</b> ωθεῖ γὰρ κάμνοντες ἀμορβεύοντο λεπάρῳ      |     |
| <b>Δ</b> ῶρα· πολύσκαρθος δὲ κεκαυμένος αὐχένα δίψη | 350 |
| <b>Ρ</b> ώετο· γωλειοῖσι δ' ἰδὼν ὀλκήρεα θῆρα       |     |

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regarding the appropriation of αἶνος by early literary critics. For the purposes of this paper it should simply be noted that Callimachus uses αἶνος (*Ia.* 4, fr. 194 Pfeiffer) and μῦθος (here) interchangeably to designate Aesopic discourse, establishing a secure link between Hellenistic and Archaic practice.

- 23 For the poetic pedigree see Ael. *NA* 6.51 (below). This fable is ὦγύγιος, indeed, making an abbreviated first appearance in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. For a fruitful discussion of parallels with the Book of Genesis, see Reeve 1996–1997: 250–258. See also Jacques 2002: 120–121.

Οὐλοὸν ἐλλιτάνευε κακῇ ἐπαλακόμεν ἄτη  
 Σαίνων. αὐτὰρ ὁ βριῖθος, ὃ δὴ ῥ' ἀνεδέξατο νότοις,  
 ἦτεεν ἄφρονα δῶρον, ὃ δ' οὐκ ἀπανήνατο χρεῖω.  
 ἐξότε γηραλέον μὲν αἰὲ φλόον ἔρπετὰ βάλλει 355  
 ὀλκήρη, θνητοὺς δὲ κακὸν περὶ γῆρας ὀπάζει  
 νοῦσον δ' ἄζαλέην βρωμήτορος οὐλομένη θήρ  
 δέξατο, καὶ τε τυπῆσιν ἀμυδροτέρησιν ἰάπτει.

An ancient fable is told among men  
 how, when Kronos' eldest blood seized heaven,  
 having allotted his brothers their illustrious realms 345  
 in his wisdom, he gave Youth to mortals – a gift given  
 in glory. For they denounced the fire-thief.  
 The fools! Out of idiocy they squandered it.  
 Weary, they entrusted the gift in laziness to an ass;  
 its throat burning with thirst, the skittish beast 350  
 ran off. And seeing the deadly crawling beast in its hole,  
 it begged and pleaded for help with its dire affliction.  
 But the snake asked the fool for a gift – the burden  
 it received on its back – and the ass did not refuse.  
 Since then, creeping serpents always slough old 355  
 skin, and evil old age presses upon mortals.  
 But the deadly beast received the brayer's thirsty  
 plague, and imparts it through rather feeble strikes.

Since its discovery by Lobel (1928: 114), the poet's signature in this passage has received some critical attention with reference to the more famous acrostics of Aratus and Vergil, but seldom in its own right.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, to my knowledge, only two possible explanations for the acrostic signature's presence in this passage have been advanced. Gow and Scholfield (1953: 177) tentatively suggest that "it is placed in the most ornamental passage of the whole poem", while Clauss (2006: 171) much more convincingly argues that Nicander's signature "associates his name both with the period when poisonous creatures, the subject of his poem, were coming into being ... and with immortality".

But having now situated the poet's fable of the διψάς within the context of the Aesopic tradition in general, and the fables of Hesiod and Callimachus in particular, I think we are in a position to say quite a bit more. First and foremost, it is clear that Nicander is engaging in a typically Hellenistic game of one-upsmanship with his poetic predecessors. Whereas his generic model Hesiod told a fable to encode a predominantly social message, and his aesthetic model Callimachus adapted the Aesopic tradition to

24 Lobel 1928. See Reeve 1996–1997: 247–250 on Dionysius the Periegete's probable awareness of the acrostic. Courtney (1990) focuses mainly on the *Alexipharmaca* example, on which see section 3 below, esp. n. 34. For citations with reference to Vergil and Aratus, see e.g., Harrison 2004; Katz 2008; Somerville 2010.



encode a critical polemic, Nicander has graduated one step further, from Aesopic criticism to Aesopic acrostic.<sup>25</sup> At *Ther.* 343–358, the encoding function of fable manifests not just in the narrative itself, but also in its very form – an instance of wordplay in its truest sense.<sup>26</sup>

Yet Nicander's engagement with these two fables extends far deeper than this playful innovation within the Aesopic tradition at large. For indeed, all three fables are told within complex narratives of mankind's decline from one state to another, and in each case with reference to Prometheus. After all, Hesiod's αἴνος of "The Hawk and the Nightingale" at *Op.* 202–212 participates in a repeated cycle of contested authority and subsequent punishment that begins with Zeus' ability to humble the proud in the poem's invocation (*Op.* 1–9), and continues through the contrast between the two types of Strife (*Op.* 11–41), Prometheus' theft of fire (*Op.* 42–53) and the creation of Pandora as punishment (*Op.* 54–105), the impiety of Silver Age man (*Op.* 130–139) and the degradation of later Ages as punishment (*Op.* 140–201), the nightingale's complaint and subsequent punishment (*Op.* 202–212), the advice to the kings and Perses (*Op.* 213–285) and the threat of punishment if that advice goes unheeded (*Op.* 286–341), all of which finally culminates in Hesiod's arrogation of vatic authority for the remainder of the poem.<sup>27</sup> Nicander's fable of the δῦψάς thus in some respects provides a Hellenistic analogue to Hesiod's fable of the "Hawk and the Nightingale" at *Op.* 202–212; both fables are told within the context of mankind's decline from a blessed to a fallen state, but whereas Hesiod's obliquely asserts his own poetic authority, Nicander's slyly asserts his own poetic immortality, and in typically recondite Hellenistic fashion.<sup>28</sup>

But even more striking is Nicander's intertextual engagement with Callimachus' fable of "The Fox, the Swan, and Zeus". For instance, in the third line of Callim. *Ia.*, fr. 192 Pfeiffer, mankind is introduced with the kenning ὁ πᾶνδός ὁ Προμήθειος ("Promethean clay"), a phrase that foreshadows both the opening of Nicander's fable and one of his favorite tech-

25 On Hesiod as Nicander's generic model, see Claus 2006: esp. 162–169.

26 On wordplay as the elevation of form to content, see Katz 2009: 100–101.

27 A valuable account of the "prospect" of Hesiod's thought remains West 1978: 46–59, esp. 47 where the idea of contested authority as an organizing principle is implicit. On the *Works and Days* as a dramatization of Justice's vindication, see Nagy 1990b: 66–67.

28 Whereas Claus (2006: 162) argues that the *Theriaca* "effectively counters the postlapsarian gloom of the Hesiodic poem with a sustained and spirited account of how knowledge makes life easy", I prefer to see Nicander's engagement with Hesiod as more ludic than polemic, with esoteric science replacing hard labor as mankind's fallen lot. Prometheus, after all, is the knowledge-seeking trickster *par excellence*. But the two approaches are not altogether incompatible. On "Promethian birds" and contested authority in a Roman context, see Green 2009: 159–160.

niques in telling it (e.g., *Ther.* 347: πῦρὸς ληΐστωρ for Prometheus himself). Secondly, as the *Diegesis* so helpfully informs us, the missing portion of Callimachus' fable described how "the swan approached the gods about abolishing old age, and the fox dared to say that Zeus was not ruling justly". Such an account almost certainly would have provided Nicander with an important precedent for the γέρας/γῆρας pun, and quite possibly would have contained a reference to the fable of the δῖψας, as well. Indeed, van Dijk has theorized on the basis of a fragment from Philo that Callimachus' swan might have raised the issue of the snake's ability to slough its skin in its embassy to the gods.<sup>29</sup>

Any lingering doubts about the validity of this hypothesis can, I think, be put to rest on the basis of two further echoes of *Iamb* 2 at *Ther.* 343–358. First, Callimachus' ἐρπετῶν ("creepers") in the seventh line of our fragment may well have prompted Nicander's ἐρπετὰ at *Ther.* 355, although the word is by no means uncommon in the herpetological *Theriaca*. But a far more compelling connection between these two fables is the fact that Nicander's acrostic signature ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟΣ inverts the two elements in the name of Callimachus' addressee *Andronikos* (ἄνδρόνικε) in the fifteenth line of our fragment. As van Dijk has observed, the Callimachean "addressee's name – possibly an alias, too – seems to be a telling compound, ironically hinting at man's (ἄνδρo-; cf. 10 ἄνδρῶν) victory (-νικος): man won, and the animals lost, the power of speech".<sup>30</sup> Nicander's fable and his acrostic signature thus invert the Callimachean precedent on the level of both form and content. In Nicander's name, victory (NIK-) comes first and mankind (-ΑΝΔΡΟΣ) comes second, and in the fable of the δῖψας, it is the animal that wins immortality, while mankind loses it. In Callimachus' fable, conversely, mankind (ἄνδρo-) comes first, and victory (-νικος) second, and mankind wins the power of speech, while the animals lose it. Thus (to adopt a grammatical metaphor), the subjective genitive of Callimachus' "victory of man" in the fable of "The Fox, the Swan, and Zeus" is transformed into the objective genitive "victory over man" in Nicander's fable of the δῖψας at *Ther.* 343–358.<sup>31</sup>

Yet at the same time, it is important to note that both poets clearly delight in the obscure ambiguity of their onomastic wordplay, since for Callimachus, humanity's victory in his fable also results in a profound aesthet-

29 Van Dijk 1997: 231. In my view, the fox is the likelier candidate for raising the issue in the embassy, since that creature's complaint of injustice prompted the punishment. But it is impossible to know for sure.

30 Van Dijk 1977: 233.

31 It may be noted that inversions of this type seem to be characteristic of intertextual acrostic play. On Vergil's similar inversion and "translation" of Aratus' acrostics, see Katz 2008.

ic loss (human beings became “wordy and babblers”), and for Nicander the “victory over man” simultaneously encodes an oblique assertion of his immortality in a manner more in keeping with the Hesiodic fable, as noted above. The inversion is therefore not so much a stark opposition as a playful reflection of (and upon) both his predecessors’ fables and their encoding function. But the good poet-doctor has still further tricks up his sleeve: for just as every φάρμακον can either harm or heal depending on how it is used, the “victory over man” in Nicander’s Aesopic acrostic is similarly complemented by its twin antidote in the *Alexipharmaca*, where the poet gives himself a taste of the same medicine he prescribed for Callimachus, matching thirst with thirst, and fighting fire with fire.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. Nicander’s Acrostic Antidote

At *Alex.* 249–279, Nicander provides his antidote for the deadly ἐφήμερον (a plant tentatively identified with meadow-saffron, *Colchicum autumnale*), so called either on account of the belief that it could kill a human being in a single day, or because its own life cycle is limited to the same time-span as it sprouts at dawn, blooms by noon, and fades by dusk.<sup>33</sup> Again, I reproduce Jacques’ text, with the restored acrostic signature in boldface:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ἦν δὲ τὸ Μηδείης Κολχηΐδος ἐχθραλέον πῦρ,<br>κεῖνό τις ἐνδέξεται ἐφήμερον, οὐ περὶ χεῖλη<br>δευομένου δυσάλυκτος ἰάπτεται ἄμμιγα κνηθμός,<br>οἷά τ’ ὀπῶ νιφόνετι κράδης ἢ τριχέϊ κνίδῃ<br>χρῶτα μαινομένοις, ἢ καὶ σπειρώδεϊ κόρσῃ<br>σκύλλης, ἢ τ’ ἔκπαγλα νέην φοινίζατο σάρκα.<br>τοῦ καὶ ἐπισχομένοιο περὶ στόμαχον βάρος ἵζει<br>πρῶτον ἐρεπτόμενον, μετέπειτα δὲ λοιγῇ συρμῶ<br>ῥιζόθεν ἐλκωθέντα, κακὸν δ’ ἀποήρυγε δειρῆς,<br>ὥς εἴ τε κρεάων θολερὸν πλῦμα χεύατο δαιτρός,<br>σὺν δέ τε καὶ νηδὺς μεμιασμένα λύματα βάλλει.<br>ἀλλὰ σὺ πολλάκι μὲν χαίτην δρυὸς οὐλάδα κόψας,<br>πολλάκι καὶ φηγοῖο, πόροις ἀκύλοισιν ὀμαρτῇ.<br>ἦε σύ γε βδῆλαιον νέον γάλαος ἔνδοθι πέλλης·<br>αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῦ κορέοιτο, καὶ ἐν στομάτεσσιν ἐρύζας.<br>ἦ μὴν πουλυγόνοιο τότε βλαστήματ’ ἀρήξει, | 250<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>255<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>260 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|

32 On the dual nature of φάρμακα, see e.g., Hom. *Od.* 4.227–232; Gorg. *Hel.* 14; Plin. *HN* 20.131.

33 On the difficulty of identifying Nicander’s plants in general, see Gow and Scholfield 1953: 23–25. For citations of the relevant Greek pharmacological lore, see Jacques 2007: 137–139.

ἄλλοτε δὲ ῥιζεῖα καθεψηθέντα γάλακτι. 265  
 Ναὶ μὴν ἄμπελόεις ἔλικας ἐνθρύπτεο νύμφαις,  
 Ἴσως καὶ βατόεντα περὶ πτορθεῖα κολούσας.  
 Καί τε σὺ γυνώσκειας εὐτρεφέος νέα τέρφη  
 Ἀσκηροῦ καρύοιο λαχυφλοίοιο κάλυμμα, 270  
 Νείαιραν τόθι σάρκα περὶ σκύλος αἶον ὀπάξει,  
 Δυσλεπέος καρύοιο τὸ Καστανὶς ἔτρεφεν αἶα.  
 Ρεῖα δὲ νάρθηκος νεάτην ἐξαίνυσο νηδύν,  
 Ὅς τε Προμηθεῖοιο κλοπὴν ἀνεδέξατο φωρῆς.  
 Σὺν δὲ καὶ ἐρπύλλοιο φιλοζώοιο πέτηλα 275  
 εὐφίμου τ' ἀπὸ καρπὸν ἄλις καταβάλλεο μύρτου.  
 ἢ καὶ πού σιδόντος ἀποβρέξαιο κάλυμμα  
 καρπείου· μιγάδην δὲ βαλὼν ἐμπίσσο μήλοις,  
 ὄφρ' ἂν ἐπιστύφοντι ποτὶ <.....  
 .....> νοῦσον δὲ κεδάσσεις.  
 But should one ingest the hateful fire of Colchian 250  
 Medea, the notorious meadow-saffron, around his lips  
 an inescapable itching strikes the poor chapped chap,  
 as for those whose skin is defiled by snow-white fig juice,  
 or stinging nettle, or the many-coated head of squill,  
 which enflames young flesh without warning. 255  
 And a heaviness settles on his stomach if he keeps it  
 down, at first mordent, and then hemorrhaging  
 with deadly retching from below, and he expels the evil  
 from his throat, and just as the carver washes foul water  
 from meat, at the same time the belly hurls the polluted bile.  
 But you, having cut some crinkled oak leaves, 260  
 and some of Valonic oak, administer them with acorns.  
 Or draw fresh milk into a pail, and let the patient drink  
 his fill, also rinsing out his mouth with the milk.  
 Indeed, at times shoots of knot-grass will help, 265  
 at other times its roots boiled in the milk.  
 Yes indeed, you should infuse vine tendrils with spring water,  
 and perhaps also bramble shoots you've chopped.  
 And you should also strip the young shells of a well-grown  
 chestnut seed covering the rind within, 270  
 there where the dry husk presses upon the inmost flesh  
 of the hard-to-peel nut the land of Castanea brings forth.  
 And easily you may extract the womb of the fennel-stalk  
 which received the spoils of Prometheus' theft.  
 And at the same time throw in some petals of evergreen  
 tufted thyme, and enough berry of astringent myrtle besides. 275  
 Or you might perhaps soak the rind of the pomegranate  
 fruit, and infuse adding with apples in a mixture  
 until the drink has astringency, [.....  
 .....] and you will dispel the illness.

Since Lobel's discovery of this acrostic alongside the example from *Ther.* 345–353, Nicander's success in fully achieving his signature here has occasioned some dispute; while most agree that the transmitted σὺν δὲ καί at *Alex.* 266 can be emended quite easily, Jacques' ἀσκηροῦ for the transmitted καστηνοῦ at *Alex.* 269 has met with skepticism.<sup>34</sup> However, as I think we should now be able to see, there are a number of linguistic, conceptual and thematic connections between this passage and *Ther.* 343–358 that argue strongly in favor of accepting Jacques' conjectures, with important implications for the interpretation of both passages and their embedded acrostics.

Let us begin with the three clearest linguistic parallels. First, it is surely no coincidence that the very first verb Nicander uses to describe the symptoms associated with ingesting the ἐφήμερον is the middle ἰάπτεται (*Alex.* 251: “strikes”, describing the deadly thirst attacking the victim's lips), whose active form ἰάπτει is the very last verb to appear the fable of the διψάς (*Ther.* 358: with the sense “imparts”, again of thirst). The inversion is striking, indeed; whereas the fable of the διψάς ends with the transfer of thirst, the antidote for ἐφήμερον begins with it. Note also that just before beginning the recipe itself, Nicander describes how the victim's belly “hurls” (*Alex.* 259: βάλλει) the polluted bile, the exact same form of the verb used by the διψάς at *Ther.* 355 to “slough” its old skin; again, the verbs occur before and after their respective acrostic signatures in a structural chiasmus, this time in the same emphatic metrical position at line-end. But there is yet another verb form repeated in that same crucial terminal position, this time in the acrostic signature itself: the ὀπάζει of *Ther.* 356 (where old age “presses upon” mortals) recurs at *Alex.* 270 (where the dry husk of the chestnut “presses upon” its inmost flesh). And the “inmost” flesh it quite literally is: note that this line is the fifth in Nicander's acrostic signature, placing it dead (or in this case, very much alive) in the center of

34 E.g., Lobel (1928: 114) considers the *Alexipharmaca* example (perhaps with a hint of irony?) unsuccessful, and while Courtney (1990: 12–13) accepts the possible emendation to “something beginning with v” at 266, in the case of the transmitted καστηνοῦ of 269 he cautiously maintains that “we must face the possibility that Nicander and Italicus were satisfied with acrostichs of their names defective in one letter, though I cannot grasp the rationale behind this”. On the conjectures (which I obviously accept) with bibliography see Jacques 2002: lxxi n. 162; lxxx n. 179; 2007: 25–26; 143–146. For a short summary of the issue and an ingenious Polish translation (but printing the older vῶν δὲ καί of Helmbold and Oikonomakos for Jacques' most recent vὰ μὴν at 266), see Witczak 2005. Cristiano Castelletti (likewise ingeniously) suggests to me a possible play on διψάω “to erase/bite twice” as a metapoetic pun on the complementary signature in the fable of the διψάς, but an intentional defect of this sort seems unlikely to me in light of Nicander's perfectionist aesthetics.

the poet's name, where the very word for "inmost" (*Alex.* 270: νεῖαιραν) provides the central letter.

Further inversions of the *Theriaca* fable are to be found in the *Alexipharmaca* antidote's evocations of Prometheus himself. First of all, the ἐφήμερον is introduced by the kenning (a technique by now familiar from *Ther.* 343–358), "the hateful fire of Colchian Medea" (*Alex.* 249). Here, in a conceptual inversion analogous to the linguistic examples noted above, Prometheus' end is implicit in the antidote's beginning, since Colchis was widely believed to be the locale of his punishment.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, as we noted at the outset, the transformation from fire to deadly thirst in Nicander's fable of the διψάς is reversed by the sympathetic φάρμακον of the ἐφήμερον antidote, as the patient's thirst is ultimately quenched through the application of the very part of the fennel-stalk "which received the spoils of Prometheus' theft" (*Alex.* 273) – a line which notably occurs toward the end of the acrostic itself, whereas in the *Theriaca* passage Prometheus was mentioned closer to the beginning (*Ther.* 347).<sup>36</sup> Of course, Prometheus' theft of fire in the fennel stalk was most famously chronicled by Hesiod, whose programmatic ῥεῖα begins the previous line in the *Alexipharmaca* enjoining the "womb's" extraction – itself a conceptual reversal (*Alex.* 272: ῥεῖα δὲ νάρθηκος νεάτην ἐξαίνυσο νηδύν).<sup>37</sup> Here again, we have another playful inversion of Promethean precedent: in Nicander's antidote for the ἐφήμερον, the notionally "easy" extraction of the fennel-stalk's "womb" is in fact a profoundly *difficult* intertextual crux that is accompanied by the deeply embedded acrostic signature, with Prometheus' end at the beginning, and his beginning at the end.<sup>38</sup>

35 E.g., [Aesch.] *PV* 415–419; Ap. Rhod. 2.1247–1251; App. *Mith.* 103.

36 Ideally, the mentions of Prometheus would both occur at equal distance from each end of their respective signatures, but perhaps Nicander is content to oppose *Ther.* 346–347 (IK) with *Alex.* 273–274 (PO).

37 Cf. Hes. *Op.* 50–52: κρύψε δὲ πῦρ· τὸ μὲν αὖτις ἐνὸς πάϊς Ἰαπετοῖο | ἔκλεψ' ἀνθρώποισι Διὸς πάρα μητιόεντος | ἐν κοῖλῳ νάρθηκι λαθὼν Δία τερπικέραυνον; 5–8: ῥέα μὲν γὰρ βριάει, ῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει, | ῥεῖα δ' ἀρίζηλον μινύθει καὶ ἄδηλον ἀέξει, | ῥεῖα δέ τ' ἰθύνει σκολιδὸν καὶ ἀγήνορα κάρφει | Ζεὺς ὕψιβρεμέτης, ὃς ὑπέρτατα δώματα ναίει.

38 Note the triple pun on νεάτην, "the *lowest* of the three strings of the musical scale, but the *highest* in pitch" (LSJ s.v. νεάτη), νηδύν, alternatively the "womb" that is the source of life (cf. Hes. *Th.* 890, 899 on Athena's birth from Zeus' head), or the "stomach" through which the patient is healed (cf. Hes. *Th.* 487, on Kronos' swallowed stone), and νεότης (*Ther.* 346), the immortality that was lost in the fable of the διψάς, but now metaphorically restored to the patient in the form of health, on which see below. It is perhaps relevant that Archimedes called his famous puzzle τὸ στομάχιον. Cf. Housman 1965: 88: "But oh, good Lord, the verse you make, | It gives a chap the belly-ache".

Furthermore, these linguistic and Promethean inversions serve to reinforce the broader thematic opposition between the loss of immortality in the fable of the διψάς and the restoration of health in the ἐφήμερον antidote, which Nicander associates with old age and youth, respectively. Indeed, whereas the passage from the *Theriaca* puns repeatedly on Zeus' gift (*Ther.* 346: γέρας), old age (*Th.* 356: γῆρας), and the snake's sloughed skin (*Th.* 355: γηραλέον φλόον), the *Alexipharmaca* passage is practically brimming with the vocabulary of youth. The juice of the fig is "snow white" (*Alex.* 252: νιφόεντι, with attendant connotations of virginity); the head of the squill "enflames young flesh without warning" (*Alex.* 254: ἔκπαγλα νέην φοινίξατο σάρκα); the milk required for the antidote is "fresh" (*Alex.* 262: νέον); the vine tendrils are to be infused with "spring water" in the signature's first line (*Alex.* 266: νύμφαις, with attendant nubile associations); the tufted thyme is "evergreen" (*Alex.* 274: φιλοζώοιο, literally "loving life"); and most importantly, the shells of the chestnut seed opened at the center of the signature are "young" (*Alex.* 268: νέα), whereas the skin sloughed by the διψάς is "old" (*Ther.* 355: γηραλέον). Thus, the two passages' contrasting emphases on old age and youth recapitulate the literal juxtaposition νεότητα γέρας (punning on γῆρας) at *Ther.* 346, where Zeus "gave Youth as a gift to mortals", with the ἡμερίοισι of that line stemming from the same root as ἐφήμερον itself – both dying humans and the deadly plant are "creatures of a day".<sup>39</sup> In this manner, Nicander triumphantly counterbalances the "ancient fable" (*Ther.* 343: ὠγόγιος ... μῦθος) of the διψάς with the innovation of his antidote, just as the fire stolen by Prometheus can be used alternatively to create or destroy, or a φάρμακον alternatively to poison or heal. But the poet's wittiest inversions of all are embedded in the acrostic signatures themselves, which, like Nicander's snake and the chestnut, are hidden by the metaphorical skins and shells of his poetry, only to be teased or stolen out through the Promethean application of knowledge. As with the onomastic play he countered in Callimachus' fable of "The Fox, the Swan, and Zeus", therefore, the poet trans-

39 See n. 6 above. Other intimations of immortality in the *Alexipharmaca* passage include the φοινίξατο of *Alex.* 254, with echoes of the mythical bird likewise treated by Hesiod (fr. 304 Merkelbach-West; note that Plut. *De def. or.* 11 = *Mor.* 415c–d introduces the quotation by saying the poet is αἰνιττόμενος); ἐξαίνυσο at *Alex.* 272, a Homeric verb "always in phrase ἐξαίνυτο θυμόν, *animam eripuit*" in the *Iliad* (LSJ s.v. ἐξαίνυμαι); and the "rind of the pomegranate (σιδόεντος) fruit" at *Alex.* 276–277, to which compare *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 371–374, where the same fruit's seeds likewise seals the oppositional cycle of life and death (the rind here being substituted by analogy with the snake's skin and the chestnut's shell). Cf. Ps.-Apollod. 1.5.3; Ov. *Met.* 5.534–542. For another Nicandrian nexus of Demeter, youth, and reptiles, see Nic. *Ther.* 483–487 with scholia on 484; fr. 56 Schneider.

forms the “victory over man” in the *Theriaca* acrostic into a “victory of man” in its *Alexipharmaca* counterpart, and a double victory for the man himself, ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟΣ.<sup>40</sup>

Last but not least, in addition to these linguistic, conceptual, and thematic reversals, Nicander’s Aesopic acrostic and its antidote accomplish one final inversion even less obvious than the rest, which we might term metapoetic. Perhaps unwittingly (or perhaps not, given the pointed omission of Nicander from his list of poets treating the διψάς), the Roman naturalist Aelian provides the key (Ael. NA 6.51 = *Aesop.* 458 Perry):

δεῖ δὲ καὶ μῦθον τῷδε τῷ ζῳῷ ἐπᾶσαι με ὅνπερ οὖν ἀκούσας οἶδα, ὥς ἂν μὴ δοκοῖν ἀμαθῶς ἔχειν αὐτοῦ. τὸν Προμηθεῖα κλέψαι τὸ πῦρ ἢ φήμη φησί, καὶ τὸν Δία ἀγανακτῆσαι ὁ μῦθος λέγει καὶ τοῖς καταμηνύσασιν τὴν κλοπὴν δοῦναι φάρμακον γήρωσ ἀμυντήριον. τοῦτο οὖν ἐπὶ ὄνῳ θείναι τοὺς λαβόντας πέπυσμαι. καὶ τὸν μὲν προΐέναι τὸ ἄχθος φέροντα, εἶναι δὲ ὥραν θέρειον, καὶ διψῶντα τὸν ὄνον ἐπὶ τινι κρήνῃ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ποτοῦ χρεῖαν ἐλθεῖν. τὸν οὖν ὄφιν τὸν φυλάττοντα ἀναστέλλειν αὐτὸν καὶ ἀπελαύνειν, καὶ ἐκεῖνον στρεβλούμενον μισθὸν οἱ τῆς φιλοτησίας δοῦναι ὅπερ οὖν ἔτυχε φέρων φάρμακον. οὐκοῦν ἀντίδοσις γίνεται, καὶ ὁ μὲν πίνει, ὁ δὲ τὸ γῆρας ἀποδύεται, προσεπιλαβὼν ὡς λόγος τὸ τοῦ ὄνου δίψος. τί οὖν; ἐγὼ τοῦ μύθου ποιητής; ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἂν εἴποιμι, ἐπεὶ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ Σοφοκλῆς ὁ τῆς τραγωδίας ποιητής καὶ Δεινόλοχος ὁ ἀνταγωνιστής Ἐπιχάρμου καὶ Ἴβυκος ὁ Ῥηγίνος καὶ Ἀριστίας καὶ Ἀπολλοφάνης ποιηταὶ κωμωδίας ἄδουσιν αὐτόν.

But I should repeat a fable regarding this creature [i.e., the διψάς], which I know from having heard it, so that I don’t seem ignorant of it. The tradition says that Prometheus stole fire, and this fable tells that Zeus grew angry and gave those who informed on the theft a drug to ward off old age. And so they took it, I am informed, and placed it on an ass. And the ass proceeded with the load on its back, but it was summertime, and the thirsty ass came upon a spring in need of a drink. Now the snake which was guarding the spring tried to prevent the ass and force it back, and the ass was compelled to give it the drug it happened to be carrying as the price of the sacred drink of friendship. And so there was an exchange [ἀντίδοσις]: the ass got his drink and the snake sloughed its skin/old age [γῆρας], receiving in addition, according to the story, the ass’s thirst. And so? Am I the creator of this fable? I wouldn’t say so, for before me Sophocles the tragedian and Dinolochus the rival of Epicharmus, and Ibycus of Rhegium, and the comic poets Aristias and Apollophanes sang of it.

As Aelian clearly attests, the exchange between the διψάς and the ass could *itself* be conceptualized in Greek as an ἀντίδοσις, a fact that Nicander emphasizes through his use of compounds derived from δέχομαι in both passages. At *Ther.* 353 – the final line of his acrostic signature – the poet uses

40 Incidentally, this interpretation may help resolve the problem that “nous ignorons la chronologie relative des *Alexipharmakes* et des *Thériaques* de Nicandre” (Jacques 2007: xii). The *Theriaca* passage was almost certainly conceived first, though concurrent composition is also a possibility.



the form ἀνεδέξατο to describe how the ass “received” the gift of immortality from humans, just as he is about to hand it over to the διψάς (*Ther.* 353). Likewise at *Alex.* 273 – in this case penultimate line of the acrostic signature – the very same form of the verb is used to describe how the “womb” of the fennel-stalk “received the spoils of Prometheus’ theft” (*Alex.* 273).<sup>41</sup> Thus, the “exchange” (ἀντίδοσις) between the ass and the διψάς that was the consequence of Prometheus’ theft of fire results in a remedy (likewise ἀντίδοσις) that cures the patient of his fiery thirst by depositing it precisely where it came from, in the “womb” of the fennel stalk that is the repository of knowledge, light and life. A victorious moment for both man and science, indeed.

#### 4. Conclusion

Nicander of Colophon can be a slippery snake, and a tough nut to crack; evidently, that is the way he himself wanted to be remembered. The poetic regimen he prescribes is not for everyone, and that is very much as it should be. After all, poetry like pharmacology is not a one-size-fits-all business. But as I hope to have shown, Nicander’s Aesopic acrostic and its antidote distill the Archaic and Hellenistic tradition of αἶνος as coded speech and apply the results to his own peculiarly dense, scholarly aesthetic. In so doing, the poet playfully inverts the precedents set not only by the works of his Archaic and Hellenistic predecessors, but also his own, thereby accomplishing a true “victory of man”. The results are not to everyone’s taste, and unlike Lucretius, the Colophonian does not honey the cup.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, while the poet’s twisted gambit for immortality does not exactly leave the reader thirsting for more, Nicander’s Aesopic acrostic and its antidote constitute an achievement to which we might well raise a glass.

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41 Notice also how another δέχομαι compound (*Alex.* 250: ἐνδέχεται) is used to describe the victim’s ingestion of the ἐφήμερον, thereby providing a frame of exchange for the *Alexipharmaca* passage.

42 *Lucr.* 1.921–950.

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# Greek Acrostic Verse Inscriptions\*

Valentina Garulli

## 1. What Is an Acrostic Poem?

“Unter einem Akrostichon verstehen wir heute ein Wort oder einen Satz, die durch die Anfangsbuchstaben, -silben bzw. -wörter aufeinanderfolgender Verse oder Strophen eines Gedichtes gebildet werden, in weiterem Sinne auch ein solches Gedicht selbst”: among the different definitions of acrostic, that given by Vogt (1967: 80) appears to be the most exact and at the same time the least limiting, and therefore can offer an excellent starting point for this paper.<sup>1</sup> Leaving the ancient use of the word aside,<sup>2</sup> the modern translation of the Greek ἀκρόστιχον is used to give a name to the literary phenomenon described by Vogt.

## 2. The Corpus Examined

In order to mark the limits of this enquiry, further details have to be given. This project considers examples of acrostics found in Greek poems, which meet the following criteria:

- (a) they are preserved as inscriptions;

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\* This paper collects the first results of a current project on Greek acrostic verse inscriptions. My warmest thanks go to Lucia Floridi, Enrico Magnelli, Camillo Neri, Eleonora Santin, Vinicio Tammaro for reading a first draft of this paper, and to the participants in the Conference for suggestions and reactions. In particular, I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to Timothy Duff, who kindly improved my English.

1 Very close to this is Gärtner's (1996: 411) definition.

2 A survey of the ancient vocabulary concerning this phenomenon is offered by Graf 1893: 1200; Leclercq 1924: 356; Vogt 1967: 81–82; Courtney 1990: 3–4; Luz 2010: 2–3.

(b) they contain no reference – neither inside nor outside the text – to Christianity;

(c) they show such a unique and consistent relationship between the acrostic and the poem as to imply a well-defined project and lay to rest any suspicion that the acrostic might be fortuitous.<sup>3</sup>

Christian acrostics have to be excluded from this research for the following reasons. First of all, one must take into account that within the Christian context the phenomenon of the acrostic takes on such a great and new importance, and has a number of such specific social and cultural implications as to require a separate evaluation. Moreover, the features of the Christian acrostic (form and content) correspond to some special and recurring types, which contribute to marking the Christian acrostic as a phenomenon different from that of the pagan texts.<sup>4</sup>

The criteria described above allow us to define a restricted selection of texts.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. The Texts<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.

MONUMENT: white marble stele with a relief described by Ritti 1981: 118.

SIZE: 75.5 cm high, 36 cm wide, 11 cm thick, letters 1/1.3 cm high.

PROVENANCE: Rhenea, Cyclades.

DATE: second/first century BC.

GENRE: funerary epigram.

LINES: 8.

METRE: elegiacs (line 5 is hypermetric; line 3 *correptio epica* καὶ; line 7 *correptio epica* twice καὶ ἀδελφεοῦ).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: name (nominative: Σαραπίων).

3 Some features that can reveal an acrostic as intentional (e.g. the emphatic devices described below) are listed by Luz 2010: 5–6.

4 For Christian acrostics, see e.g. Leclercq 1924; Guarducci 1978: 1763–1772.

5 Only reliable acrostics will be examined; the *dubia* will not be discussed here.

6 In the following texts the letters belonging to an acrostic, mesostic and telestic will be printed in bold characters, in order to help the reader to see them. The elegiacs will not be indented since they are not indented on the stone. Elision will be marked in the printed text only when the elided letter is not inscribed on the stone; when the stone has the *scriptio plena*, this will be printed. Iota subscript will be used when iota does not appear in the inscription. In the critical apparatus both what can still be read on the stone and what was read when the inscription was available will be printed in capital letters. Both text and apparatus are adapted to the convention described in *SEG* 53/1 (2003), p. xv.

LAYOUT: left-aligned lines; lines correspond to verses; the first letter of each line is larger than the following letters.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *CIG* 2.2321 (Böckh); *EG* 149 (Kaibel); Duetschke 1880: 183 (no. 424); Cougny 2.265; *GVI* 662 and p. 692 (Peek); Couilloud 1974: 203–204 (no. 466 with further bibliography and *addendum* on p. 378); Wilhelm 1980: 42–43 (no. 56); Ritti 1981: 118–119 (no. 59 with further bibliography); Santin 2009: 273–275 (no. 25); catalogue dossier edited by Eva Soccia on behalf of Regione Veneto (received *per litteras*). See also Barbieri 1975: 328 (no. 1) and Neutsch 1985: 100.

PHOTO: 2 photos published by Couilloud (1974: pl. 81), one of the whole monument and one of a squeeze of the inscription; 2 photos published by Ritti (1981), one of the whole monument (p. 118) and the other of the inscription (p. 119); the former was reprinted by Neutsch (1985: 113 no. 6), the latter was reprinted by Santin (2009: 274 pl. 18).

PRESENT PLACEMENT/STATE: Museo Maffeiiano, Verona, inv. no. 28656.

σῆμα μὲν ἐν στήλῃ γλυπτῇ θέσαν ἡνίκ' ἐγὼ μὲν  
 ἀελίου γλυκερὴν λείπον ἐπ' ἐσχατήν,  
 ῥηγεῖς δέ με δέκτο μυχὸς καὶ ἀλάμπετον οὐδας  
 Αἰδεῶ Μάρθ[α]ν κρύψε μ' ὑπὸ σκοτίν,  
 πατὴρ δὲ μὲν Δημοσθένης, ἐτέων δύο κεῖκοσι μ' οὐσαν, 5  
 ἵστε δέ με τριτάτην ἡματος ὀλλυμένην.  
 ὦ μητρὸς (σ)τυγερῆς καὶ ἀδελφεοῦ εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο,  
 νοῦσος ἀκολύτῳι μόνισμον εἴλε τύχη.

2 ἐπ' ἐσχατήν Kaibel : ἐπεσχατίν Klaffenbach (a Ritti laud.) : ἐπεσχα(ρ)ίν Böckh, Cougny : ὑποσκοτίν Wilhelm (a Ritti laud.) : ἐπ(ι)σ(τ)α(σ)ίν J. Bousquet et C. Vatin (ap. Couilloud) || 3 μ' ἔδεκτο Böckh, Cougny || 4 suppl. Duetschke : μάρ[σαν? γαῖαν] ὑπὸ Böckh, Cougny || 5 (δ') οὐσαν dub. Peek || 6 αἵματος Cougny || 7 ΜΗΤΡΟΣΤΥ ΓΕΡΗΣ suppl. Maffei (a Ritti laud.) : μητρὸς (λ)υ(γ)ρῆς Couilloud || 8 iota mutum incertum in lapide | μόνισμο(ς) Böckh

## 2.

MONUMENT: red limestone stele with a frame, broken on the right side.

SIZE: 37 cm high, 36 cm wide, 10 cm thick, letters 0.5 cm high (line 1 1.1 cm).

PROVENANCE: Seleucia ad Eulaeum (Susa), Media.

DATE: third/second century BC (Merkelbach and Stauber),<sup>7</sup> first century BC – first century AD (Cumont, Powell), first century AD (Potts, Canali De Rossi *ad IEOG* 221).

GENRE: hymn.

LINES: “inscription with the remains of thirty-one lines, on one column – when complete it consisted of at least two columns; but all of the second is lost except a few letters at the foot” (Powell 1933: 202).

<sup>7</sup> Since Susa is mentioned as Seleucia in the acrostic, Merkelbach and Stauber date the inscription between the reigns of either Seleucus I (321–280 BC) or his son Antiochus I (280–261 BC) and Phraates IV (38–32 BC). Other scholars think that the name Seleucia might have been used even after the Seleucid period.

METRE: priapeans (line 4 *corruptio Attica* δῆ; line 21 synizesis ὄρεος).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: “expanded” name (Ἡρόδ[ω]ρος Ἀρτέμωνος [Σελε]υκεὺς τῶν π[ρὸς τῷ] Εὐλαίῳ . . . νικητῆς γέ[γονε] τ[, suppl. Cumont).

LAYOUT: left-aligned lines; lines correspond to verses; at least 2 columns.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Cumont 1928: 89–96 (no. 6); P. Mazon ap. Cumont 1931: 239 n. 2; SEG 7.14; SGO 3.12/03/01 (Merkelbach and Stauber); IEOG 221 (Canali De Rossi); JE 402 (Merkelbach and Stauber); Garulli 2010: no. 2.2.1. See also Powell 1933: 202–203; Festugière 1950; Potts 1999: 365–366, 397.

PHOTO: facsimile published by Cumont (1928: 92) and reprinted by Canali De Rossi in IEOG p. 126.

PRESENT PLACEMENT/STATE: Musée du Louvre, Paris.

|                                                        |                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| [ἀνέθηκ]ε Ἀπ[όλλωνι] Ἡρόδωρος Ἀρτέμωνος Σελευκεύς      |                         |
| ἦδη . . . μχ[                                          | ]λη καὶ νεωσ . . .      |
| ῥοι[                                                   | ]ς ἡδὲ θεὸς [σύ]        |
| ο[                                                     | πα]μφαις, Ὑπερ[ίῳν]     |
| δ[ώμασιν δὲ κρ]ε[μ]ῆς [θ]ύρας [πρόσθεν εἰ]ρεσιώνας,    |                         |
| [ω                                                     | εὐτόκο]υ τε Νανα[ίας]   |
| ῥ[ιγούσιν δ' ὕ]πὸ πημονῶν εκ . . ι . λαις σὲ βοη[θεῖν] | 5                       |
| ο[ῖδα· σὸν σθ]έν[ο]ς οὐρανὸ[ν σύν]τονον διελίσσ[ει],   |                         |
| σ[ὴν γαῖαν δ]ὲ πολυτρόφον καὶ τόπον τὸν [ἔνερθεν]      |                         |
| [αὐγάξεις, τεὸν οὐδαμῇ δ]έσμα τέρμα θ' ὕπε[ρβάς].      |                         |
| [ρ                                                     | ]κρα . . μα διατρ[ῆς]   |
| τ[                                                     | ]τιων ασ[ ]μιν προ[ι    |
| ε[                                                     | ]σε αρ[                 |
| μ[                                                     | ]ν τοὺς ὕ[              |
| ω[                                                     |                         |
| ν[                                                     |                         |
| οἱ ὕ[                                                  |                         |
| σω[                                                    | ] ὀπά[ζ]εις             |
| [σ                                                     | ] στοᾶς σῆς             |
| [ε                                                     | πλήθος ἄσπ]ετο[ν] ἄμμου |
| [λ                                                     | ] και[νόν] ἐξοχετεύεις, |
| [ἔξ] ὄρεος [δὲ δ]υσ[η]νύτου πλ.ωτὰ βένθεα τέμνεις,     | 20                      |
| ῥεις δ' εὐσεβέσιν χύδην χρυσεόρ(ρ)υτον ὄλβον,          |                         |
| καὶ ψήχεις ἐνὶ φ[ω]λεοῖς θήρας, ἄμβροτε, σαίνεις,      |                         |
| ἔξαίφνης δὲ σὺ [παρ]δάλεις ἡμεροῖς ἐνὶ βήσσαις,        |                         |
| ὑπνοῦντας δ' ἀμαθεστάτους [ἡλ.]ύγησι πυκάζεις,         | 25                      |
| σὺ πλοῦτον π[ι]νυτοῖς νέμεις [οὐ π]αραίρετον εὖρουν·   |                         |
| τοιγὰρ ἔθν[εα] καὶ πόλεις πολυλ[υ]ώνυμο[ν] ὄμ]μα       |                         |
| ᾠσώσαν, ἐπεὶ σέβας μ[οῦνο]ς ἔσκει[ς] ἀπάντων.          |                         |
| ναί, Μαρά θεέ, πανταχ[οῦ] . . . . .                    |                         |
| παντόπτης, ὕπατος [θεῶν] . . . . .                     | 30                      |
| [vv. 31–52]                                            |                         |
| γ[                                                     |                         |
| οισ[                                                   |                         |
| νῦ[ν                                                   |                         |
| ευ[                                                    |                         |
| τ[                                                     |                         |
|                                                        | 55                      |

2 suppl. Vollgraff (ap. Cumont) || 3–5 suppl. Cumont || 3 ο[c. 5]λιας[c. 11 πα]μφοαῖς SEG || 6–8 suppl. Vollgraff (ap. Cumont) || 6 ἐκ . . . πι . . . δαις SEG, ἔκπαλαι dub. Cumont || 7 σθ]έν[ο]ς vel μ]έν[ο]ς Cumont || 8 σ[ὸ] γαῖάν τ]ε SEG || 9 suppl. Vollgraff (ap. Cumont) : [σφέτερ' οὐδαμῇ] θέσμα τέρμα τ' Bidez (a Cumont laud.) : [αὐγάζεις, τεὸν οὐδαμῇ] δεσμὰ τέσμα θ' SEG || 10 [ρ c. 20]l . . . λμα SEG, fin. suppl. Cumont || 17 suppl. Cumont || 19–27 suppl. Cumont || 20 [λ . . . ]ς σ[c. 12]η καιν[ὸν ἐ]ξο-  
χετεύεις SEG || 22 XPYCEOPYTON corr. ed. pr. || 23 καὶ ὕψηλεις (= ἀψηλῆ) dub.  
Vollgraff (ap. Cumont) | σαίν(ων) Vogliano (a Cumont laud.) || 25 ὕ(μ)νοῦντας Mazon,  
dub. Cumont, SEG | suppl. Vollgraff (ap. Cumont) : ὁ[ξί]ότησι Mazon, SEG ||  
28 suppl. Vollgraff (ap. Cumont) || 29–30 suppl. Cumont

## 3.

MONUMENT: southern pillar of a temple of Isis, western block.

SIZE: 34 cm high, 96 cm wide, letters 2 cm high, line spacing 0.5/1 cm.

PROVENANCE: Philae, Egypt.

DATE: 7 BC (8th of March, according to *IPhilae* 142).

GENRE: dedicatory epigram.

LINES: 10.

METRE: elegiacs (lines 8 and 9 *correptio epica* καγῶ and καῖ).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC/TELESTIC:<sup>8</sup> “expanded” name (Κατῆλιου τοῦ καὶ Νικάνορος).

LAYOUT: left-aligned lines; lines correspond to verses.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *IPhilae* 143 (Bernand) with a complete bibliography; Luz 2010: 43–47.

See also Leclercq 1924: 359–360; Barbieri 1975: 328–329 (no. 4); Santin 2009: 262 n. 172; Mairs 2011: 290–292 and in this volume.

PHOTO: 3 photos published by Bernand in *IPhilae*, pl. 14–16.

κάμῃ τὸν εὐτέχνου φωτὸς στίχον, ὦ φίλε, βῆμα  
τίμιον ἀμπαύσας ἔγμαθε καὶ χάρισαι  
λιταῖς ἱστορίαις λιτὸν πόνον, οἷα πέπαιγμαι,  
οὐ κενὰ μηνύων, οὐπερ ἔφυν γενέτοιν·  
τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ πλώσας, φησί, ξένε, χεύματα Νείλου, 5  
καιρὸν ἔχω φωνεῖν· χαίρετε πολλά, Φίλοι·  
νικῶμαι πέτραις τε καὶ οὖρεσιν, ὦ καταράκται·  
καγῶ ἔχω τεύχειν ἱστορικὴν σελίδα  
νοστήσας, καὶ ἰδὼν Νικάνορα καὶ γένος· ἄλλο  
“ρος” κατὰλοιπον ἔχω· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τέλος. 10

8 Luz (2010: 393) describes the telestic as follows: “Ein Wort oder eine Wortfolge, die aus den Buchstaben am rechten Rand des Textblocks von oben nach unten gelesen wird, also ein ‘Akrostichon’, das nicht am Anfang, sondern am Ende der Zeilen steht”.



## 4.

MONUMENT: white limestone stele perfectly square.

SIZE: 62 cm high, 62 cm wide, 12.5 cm thick.

PROVENANCE: Alexandria, Arachosia (Kandahar).

DATE: first century BC – first century AD.<sup>9</sup>

GENRE: funerary epigram.

LINES: 20.

METRE: elegiacs (line 18 *contra metrum*; line 5 synizesis Μουσέων).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: “expanded” name (διὰ Σωφύτου τοῦ Ναράτου).

LAYOUT: left-aligned lines; lines correspond to verses; the letters which form the acrostic are engraved before the beginning of the verse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004; Rougemont 2005: 127–133; Santin 2009: 276–282 (no. 27); *SEG* 54.1568; *JE* 105 (Merkelbach and Stauber). See also Pinault 2005; Rougemont 2006: 721–722; Garulli 2008: 652–660; Hollis 2009: 435 *ad fr.* 137; Coloru 2009: 289–290 (no. 6); Del Corso 2010: 3–5; Hollis 2011: 112–116; Mairs in this volume; Garulli (Forthcoming: no. 2.1.2). A mere translation in Bernard and Rougemont 2003: 1160–1161 (French); Nagle and Burstein 2006: 285 (English); Lougovaya 2009 (English).

PHOTO: only one photo was published by Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont (2004: 230 pl. 1), reprinted by Rougemont (2005: 135 fig. 1); Santin (2009: 279 pl. 19); Garulli (2008: pl. 1); Del Corso (2010: pl. 1b).

PRESENT PLACEMENT/STATE: private collection.

|   |                                                |    |
|---|------------------------------------------------|----|
| Δ | δηρὸν ἐμῶγ κοκυῶν ἐριθηλέα δόματ' ἐόντα        |    |
| Ι | ἴς ἄμαχος Μοιρῶν ἐξόλεσεν τριάδος·             |    |
| Α | αὐτὰρ ἐγώ, τυννὸς κοιμίδῃ βιότοιο τε πατρῶν    |    |
| Σ | Σώφυτος εὖνις ἐὼν οἰκτρὰ Ναρατιάδης,           |    |
| Ω | ὥς ἀρετὴν Ἑκάτου Μουσέων τ' ἥσ(κ)ηκα σὺν ἐσθλῇ | 5  |
| Φ | φυρτὴν σωφροσύνη, (τ)ῆμος ἐπεφρασάμην          |    |
| Υ | ὕψασαίμ' κε πῶς μέγαρον πατρώϊον αὐθις·        |    |
| Τ | τεκνοφόρον δὲ λαβὼν ἄλλοθεν ἀργύριον,          |    |
| Ο | οἴκοθεν ἐξέμολον μεμαῶς οὐ πρόσθ' ἐπανελθεῖν   |    |
| Υ | ὑψιστον κτᾶσθαι πρίμ' μ' ἀγαθὸν ἄφενος·        | 10 |
| Τ | τοῦνεκ' ἐπ' ἐμπορίησιν ἰὼν εἰς ἄστεα πολλὰ     |    |
| Ο | ὄλβον ἀλωβήτως εὐρὺν ἐληϊσάμην.                |    |
| Υ | ὕμνητος δὲ πέλων πάτρην ἐτέεσσιν ἐσῆμαι        |    |

<sup>9</sup> On palaeographical grounds the inscription was dated by the first editors to the second century BC, but such a chronology has recently been questioned by Santin, who has pointed out the close similarity of the letter forms on Sophytos' epitaph to the epsilon-theta style. On these grounds, Santin dates Sophytos' epigram to the first century BC at the earliest: this dating is approved now by Del Corso (2010: 4–5), who discusses the editors' cultural arguments and mentions the epitaph of a Roman soldier buried around Alexandria dated to the beginning of the first century AD as the only parallel with such a writing. In Hollis' (2011: 113) opinion, “a date in the second century BC ... seems to fit well with an impression of Greek culture on the increase which the poem conveys, but a later date cannot be ruled out”.

|          |                                               |    |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>N</b> | νηρίθμοις τερπνός τ' εὐμενέταις ἐφάνην·       |    |
| <b>A</b> | ἀμφοτέρους δ' οἶκόν τε σεσηπότα πάτριον εἶθαρ | 15 |
| <b>P</b> | ῥέξας ἐκ καινῆς κρέσσονα συντέλεσα            |    |
| <b>A</b> | αἰάν τ' ἔς τύμβου πεπτωκότος ἄλλον ἔτευξα,    |    |
| <b>T</b> | τὴν καὶ ζῶν στήλην (ὧ)δ' ἐπέθηκα λάλον.       |    |
| <b>O</b> | οὕτως οὖν ζηλωτὰ τάδ' ἔργματα συντελέσαντος   |    |
| <b>Y</b> | υἱέες υἱωνοί τ' οἶκον ἔχοιεν ἐμοῦ.            | 20 |

**3** KOMIDHI edd. prr. : KOMIDHC Merkelbach || **5** HCXHKa corr. edd. prr. || **6** ΘΗ MOC corr. edd. prr. || **17** AIANTEC Merkelbach-Stauber || **18** ENOΔΩΙΕΠΕΘΗ KA corr. V. Tammaro : <τή>δ' ἐπέθηκα C. Neri : ἔν(θ)' ἐπέθηκα vel ἐν(θά)δ' ἔθηκα M. Nobili : <τή>νδ' ἐπέθηκα F. Chamoux (ap. edd. prr.) | τὴν τ' ἐν ὁδῶι στήλην ζῶν ἐπέθηκα λάλον Hollis

## 5.

MONUMENT: sarcophagus.

PROVENANCE: Sidyma, Lycia.

DATE: first/second century AD.

GENRE: funerary epigram.

LINES: 12.

METRE: elegiacs (lines 7 and 11 hiatus μούνα ἑαυτῷ, ἑαυτῷ ἄφθονα and βίου ἀτρα-  
πύς; lines 8 and 12 *scriptio plena* in elision τε and δέ).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: name (genitive, lines 1–11: Ἀριστοδήμου).

LAYOUT: lines correspond to verses; verses not aligned.<sup>10</sup>

BIBLIOGRAPHY: TAM 2/1.203 (Kalinka); GVI 261 (Peek); SGO 4.17/08/04 (Merkelbach and Stauber); Santin 2009: 271–272 (no. 24); Luz 2010: 35–36. See also Barbieri 1975: 329 (no. 6).

PHOTO: Benndorf's facsimile (published in *Reisen in Lykien und Karien* 1.79 no. 56: *non vidi*) reprinted by Kalinka in TAM 2/1.203 and Merkelbach and Stauber in SGO 4.17/08/04.

PLACEMENT/STATE: lost, text based on Benndorf's facsimile and squeezes.

|                                                             |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ἄνθρωπος κἀγὼ τις ἐὼν ταλα(σ)ίφρονι {ι} θυμῷ                |    |
| ῥῆιδίου βιότου πᾶν τέλος ἐφρασάμην,                         |    |
| ἔχνος ὅπου λήγει βιοτήσιον ἢ τί περισσὸν                    |    |
| σώματος ἐσσεῖται πνεύματος ἐκπαμένου.                       |    |
| τοῦνεκα δὴ τόδ' ἔτευσα <sup>11</sup> (λ)θοσοῖκῃ χερὶ ἄνγος, | 5  |
| δῶρα μένη σκῆνος κἂν κόνις οὐσα τύχη.                       |    |
| δῶρα βίου τάδε μούνα ἑαυτῷ ἄφθονα τεύσας                    |    |
| ἡμετέρῃ τε ἀλόχῳ Ναννίδι σεμνοτάτῃ                          |    |
| μουνολεχῇ ζήσασι βίον μο(ύ)νοισί τε τύμβον                  |    |
| οἶκον ἐλευθερίας σεμνοπρεποῦς ἐθέμην,                       | 10 |

10 Although Merkelbach and Stauber in SGO 4.17/08/04 print the first letters of the lines twice, the facsimile does not show any emphatic device for the acrostic.

11 See n. 24 below.

ῥμειν το[ις] μετέπειτα βίου ἀτραποὺς ὑποφαίνων.  
ἐκ δὲ ἀκροστιχίδος γνῶθι τὸ σῆμα τίνος.

1 ΤΑΛΑΕΙΦΡΟΝΗ corr. Kalinka || 3 βιοτῆς ἰόν malim (“ubi perveniens vitae vestigium desinit”) || 5 ΕΤΕΥΣΑΝΙΘΟΣΟΙΚΗ corr. Kalinka : ἔτευ(ξ)α (λι)θο(ξ)οῖκῃ Kalinka, Peek, Merkelbach-Stauber, Santin || 7 τεύ(ξ)ας Kalinka, Peek, Merkelbach-Stauber, Santin || 9 ΒΙΟΝΜΟΙΝΟΙΣΙ leg. in ectypis Kalinka : βίον (κ)οινοῖσι cum Zingerle (ap. Kalinka) malim || 11 suppl. Kalinka : το[ῦ] malim | ΥΠΟΦΑΙΝΩΝ leg. in ectypis Kalinka : ΥΠΟΒΑΙΝΩΝ Benndorf

## 6.

MONUMENT: marble tablet, perhaps designed to be set into a niche (Stroud 1979: 36).

SIZE: 51 cm wide (Mordtmann 1881: 123), originally a thin tablet 44.5 cm high, ca. 51 cm wide, 7 cm thick (Stroud 1979: 36).

PROVENANCE: found in Kyzikos, Mysia (Mordtmann 1881), but see line 4.

DATE: first/second century AD.

GENRE: funerary epigram.

LINES: 10.

METRE: elegiacs (lines 1 and 8 *corruptio Attica* σημά and ἀκροστιχίδος; line 2 *corruptio epica* καὶ; lines 5, 7, 8 *corruptio epica* ὅσσοι, καὶ, καὶ).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC AND MESOSTIC:<sup>12</sup> “expanded” name (Ἀπολλωνίδη, χαίρε).

LAYOUT: lines correspond to verses; left-aligned lines; lines 1–5 are divided in two parts in order to emphasize the mesostic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Mordtmann 1881: 123 (no. 5); Haussoullier 1898: 356–357 (no. 3); *GVI* 1610 (Peek); *IKyz* 494 (Schwertheim); *SGO* 2.08/01/34 (Merkelbach and Stauber); Luz 2010: 42–43. See also Barbieri 1975: 329 (no. 10); Stroud 1979: 36.

PHOTO: facsimile of the inscription based on a squeeze given by Mordtmann (1881: 123); photo of the stone published by Stroud (1979: pl. 3b) and Schwertheim in *IKyz* pl. 34; photo of the squeeze published by Schwertheim in *IKyz* pl. 35.

PLACEMENT/STATE: only the left part survives, now preserved in the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, inv. no. 3040.

ἀ κύρβις ποτὶ σῆμα χρόνου μνημῆιόν ἐστ[ι]  
πᾶσι καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς αἶνος ὀφειλόμενος·  
οὐ γάρ τις μοι ζῶντ ι [χό]λον θυμαλγέα [πέσσειν],  
λωίτερος γάρ ἔφυν φ ροντίσι Καρδια[νῶν]  
λαῶν θ' ὅσσοι ἕασιν ἐπὶ χθονός, ἣν περὶ πᾶσαν 5  
ὥκεανὸς κόλποις ἐνδέδεται ῥοθίοι[ς].  
νωίτερον δέ, ξεί[ν]ε, καὶ οὔνομα πρόσθ[ε] χαραχθὲν]  
ῖσθι καὶ εὐρήσεις ἐντὸς ἀκροστιχίδ[ος].  
δὴ γάρ μοι γενεὴ μὲν ἀφ' αἵματος οὐρανίωνων,  
ῖκω δ' εἰς Ἀίδην ὀγδοάτης δεκά[δος]. 10

12 Luz (2010: 392) describes the mesostic as follows: “Ein Wort oder eine Wortfolge, die aus Buchstaben in der Mitte des Textblocks von oben nach unten gelesen wird, also ein ‘Akrostichon’, das nicht am Anfang, sondern in der Mitte der Zeile steht”.

1 suppl. Peek : ἔστιν Mordtmann : ἔστ[αι] Haussoullier || 3 suppl. Haussoullier || 4 γα[μετῆς φ]ροντίσι Mordtmann | fin. suppl. Haussoullier : καρ[δι]α[καῖς] Mordtmann || 5 suppl. Mordtmann || 6 suppl. Peek : ῥοθίο[υ] Mordtmann : ῥοδίοι[ς] Schwertheim || 7 suppl. Peek : πρόσθ[εν ἀκούσας] Haussoullier : πρόσθ[ε νοήσας] Mordtmann || 8 suppl. Mordtmann || 9 suppl. Peek || 10 suppl. Mordtmann

## 7.

MONUMENT: red-painted inscription,<sup>13</sup> temple of Mandulis.

SIZE: 60 cm high, 126 cm wide (Gauthier 1911: 2.278).

PROVENANCE: Kalabsha, Talmis, Egypt.

DATE: early imperial period (compare *IMEG* 167).

GENRE: dedicatory epigram (*proskynema*).

LINES: 12.

METRE: lines 1–4 and 6–9 elegiacs (line 2 incorrect pentameter, 3 problematic hexameter, in line 9 διακοσίας ι seems to be consonantalized), 5 hexameter, 10–12 apparently *extra metrum*; line 1 *scriptio plena* in elision σε and Πύθιε.

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: name (nominative, lines 1–7: Πάκκιος).

LAYOUT: “sans cadre, en grosses lettres régulières et soignées” (Gauthier 1911: 2.278).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Gauthier 1910: 88–90 (no. V and 130); Gauthier 1911: 2.278–279 (no. 23); Cazzaniga 1964; Cazzaniga and Merkelbach 1965 with further bibliography; *SEG* 24.1244; *IMEG* 169 (Bernand); Peek 1975; Totti 1985: 111–112 (no. 43); Wagner 1993; Burstein 1998; Schubert 2004: 114. See also Mairs 2011: 283–288 and in this volume.

PHOTO: Gauthier’s uncertain transcriptions, two in capital letters (1910: 89; 1911: 2.278–279), one in small letters (1910: 89).

PLACEMENT/STATE: lost.

πάντοτέ σε ὑμνήσω, Λατο[ῦ](ς γ)όνε, Πύθι(ε) Ἀπολλων,  
 ἀθανάτων προκαθάγεμα κα(ῖ) χρυσόχελ(υ) Παιάν.  
 καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ σοῖς προθύροις ἦλθον· (ἐ)π(ί)νευ(σ)ον,  
 κύριε, τὰς προκο[πά]ς μ' ἐν στρατιῇ μεγάλα[ς].  
 ἰ(γ)άρ μοι δόιης· κά(γ)ὼ λ(οι)βαῖς ἀποδώσω 5  
 οἷα θεῶ μεγάλῳ καὶ Ἰσιδι τῇ βασιλίσσῃ.  
 σπείσω πάντοτ' ἐγὼ τοῖς δυσὶ τῶν προκοπῶν.  
 ἰ δ' ἐ(θέλ)ις γνῶναι καὶ τοῦνομα τοῦ γράψαντος  
 δι(ς) τὰς διακοσίας ψή(φ)ισον ἱτέ<sup>14</sup> μίαν.  
 τὸ προσκύνημα τοῦ γράψαντος 10  
 καὶ τοῦ ἀναγνόντος σήμερον  
 παρὰ θεῶ Μάνδουλι.

13 I use the term “inscription”, and avoid “graffito”, following Mairs 2011: 282; on the distinction between “inscriptions” and “graffiti”, see Mairs 2010: 156–158.

14 Peek 1975: 137: “ἱτέ für ἡδέ hat in dieser Spätzeit kaum etwas Auffälliges, Vertauschung von δ und τ zumal ist jedem von den Papyri her geläufig”.

1 CEΥΜΝΗCΩ, σεῦ μνήσω Gauthier, Cazzaniga, Cazzaniga-Merkelbach | ΜΤΟ . ΠΟ NE, μτο . πον ε Gauthier (1910: 89), Λατοῦς γόνε vel Λατόγονε Gauthier (1910: 130), ΛΑΤΟ . ΠΟΝΕ Gauthier (1911: 2.278): μιτοπόνε Cazzaniga: (Π)υθο(κ)τόνε e.g. Merkelbach in Cazzaniga-Merkelbach, Totti | ΠΙΘΙΟΑΠΟΛΛΟΝ, Πίθιο Ἀπόλλων Gauthier (1910: 89), ΠΥΘΙΟΑΠΟΛΛΟΝ Gauthier (1911: 2.278), corr. Cazzaniga || 2 προκαθά(γ)μα κα(ῖ) Cazzaniga (προκαθ(ή)γ(η)μα Totti): προκαθαγέ, μάκαρ West (a Bernand laud.), Peek | ΚΑΡΧΥΣΟΧΕΛΠΙΑΙΑΝ, καρ Χρυσόχελ πιαian Gauthier: κα(ῖ) χρυσόχελ(ε) Παιάν Cazzaniga (qui “Χρυσόχελυ Frank ap. G(authier)” scripsit, sed hoc supplementum reperire non potui), Cazzaniga-Merkelbach || 3 ΑΠΑΝΕΥΟΝ, ἀπανευον Gauthier, corr. et suppl. Merkelbach in Cazzaniga-Merkelbach: ἀ(ν)άνευ(σ)ον Cazzaniga: (λιτ)ανεύ(ω)ν Bingen (SEG), Peek, Totti || 4 ΠΡΟΚC . . CΜΕΝCΤΡΑΤΙΗ ΜΕΓΑΛΑ, προκ . . . σμεν στρατη μεγάλα Gauthier (1910: 89), ΠΡΟΚC . . CΜΕΝ CΤΡΑΤΙΗΜΕΓΑΛΑ Gauthier (1911: 2.278), suppl. Cazzaniga: προκο[πά]ς μ’ ἐν στρατῇ μετάδος Peek || 5 ΠΑΡΜΟΙ, παρ μοι Gauthier, corr. Cazzaniga | ΚΑΤ . ΩΛΩΒΑΙC, κατ . ωλωβαις Gauthier, corr. Cazzaniga || 8 ΙΔΕΙΝΑΙΕΓΝΩΝΑΙ, ιδεῖναι, ἐγνῶναι Gauthier, corr. Merkelbach in Cazzaniga-Merkelbach, Totti: ἰ δεῖ (ἀνα)γνῶναι Cazzaniga, Bernand: ἰ δειφῶς γνῶναι Peek || 9 ΔΙΕΤΑCΔΙΑΚΟCΙΑC, διετάς διακοσίας Gauthier, corr. Merkelbach in Cazzaniga-Merkelbach | +H+ICONITEMIAN<sup>~</sup>, ψήφισον ἱτεμίαν Gauthier (1910: 89), ΨΗΦΙCΟΝΙΤΕΜΙΑΝ<sup>~</sup> Gauthier (1911: 2.279), corr. Peek: ψή(φ)ισον ἱκο(σι)μίαν Cazzaniga in Cazzaniga-Merkelbach, Bernand: ψήφισον ἰ τεμίαν Bingen (SEG): ψή(φ)ισον (καὶ)μίαν Wagner (1993: 147): ψήφισον ἱταμίαν Totti || 12 Μανδούλι = Μανδούλει Cazzaniga-Merkelbach, Μανδούλι Totti

## 8.

MONUMENT: red-painted inscription, temple of Mandulis.

SIZE: 92 cm high, 60/72 cm wide (Gauthier 1911: 2.238).

PROVENANCE: Kalabsha, Talmis, Egypt.

DATE: first–third century AD (see Bernand *ad IMEG* 168 p. 593 n. 1).

GENRE: dedicatory epigram (*proskynema*).

LINES: 36.

METRE: lines 1–23 sotadeans (18 uncertain, 22 *correptio epica* ποῖημα), 24 and 27 pentameters, 25–26 and 28–34 hexameters, 36 uncertain.

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: “expanded” name (Μάξιμος δεκουρίων ἔγραψα).

LAYOUT: a horizontal stroke is placed below the first letters of lines 7 and 22, to mark the main parts of the long acrostic (Μάξιμος and δεκουρίων ἔγραψα).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Mahaffy 1894: 149–151 (no. 1, transcription checked by A-H. Sayce); Bury 1894; Sayce 1894: 284–291 (no. 1); Weil in Sayce 1894: 285–291 = Weil 1902: 112–119; Rohde 1895; Kaibel 1895; Gauthier 1910: 66–76 (no. 1); Gauthier 1911: 2.238–239; Koch 1926: 29–30 (fr. 17); Manteuffel 1930: 198–199 (appendix no. 1); Longo 1969: 144–158 (no. 79); *IMEG* 168 (Bernand) with further bibliography; Merkelbach 1969 *ad vv.* 19–22; Peek 1975: 137–138 *ad vv.* 33–36; Totti 1985: 107–110 (no. 42); Brandis 2002. See also Luz 2010: 38–40; Knuf 2010; Mairs 2011: 283–288 and in this volume.

PHOTO: several copies made between 1893 and 1910.

PLACEMENT/STATE: Gauthier (1911: 2.238) wrote: “la fin des vers n’est pas toujours visible, mais dans l’ensemble le text est fort bien conservé. Les lignes 16 et 35,

écrites sur des joints de pierres, ont disparu sous le lavage et le ciment qu'on a dû couler dans ces joints pour les préserver de l'invasion de l'eau; de même, un joint vertical a mangé presque à la fin de chacune des lignes 12 à 26 la valeur des trois ou quatre lettres. La ligne 34 a également souffert, et je ne puis garantir l'exactitude absolue de ce que j'ai cru y voir"; the inscription was no longer legible by August 1961, "avant le démontage du temple et son transport dans les environs d'Assouan" (Bernand *ad IMEG* 168 p. 591).

μακάριον ὅτ' ἔβην ἡρεμίας τόπον ἐσαθρήσαι,  
 ἄερί τὸ ποθαινὸν ψυχῆς πνεῦμ' ἐπανεῖναι,  
 ξένα μοι βιοτῇ περὶ φρένα πάντοθεν ἐδονεῖτο,  
 ἵστορα κακίης ἐμαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχων ἔλεγχον,  
 μῦστιν τότε κίκλησκε φύσις πόνον γεωργεῖν· 5  
 ὁ σοφὸς τότε ἐγὼ ποικίλον ἥρμοζον αἰοιδῆν,  
 σεμνὸν ἀπὸ θεῶν κωτίλον ἐπιτυχῶν νόημα.  
 δῆλον ὅτε θεοῖς ἀρεστὸν ἠργάζετο Μοῦσα,  
 Ἑλικῶνι χλόης ἄνθεμον ἀπετίναζα κῶμον·  
 καὶ τότε μέ τις ὕπνου μυχρὸς ἠρέθισε φέρεσθαι, 10  
 δλίγον ἐπίφοβον φαντασίης ὄναρ τραπήναι·  
 ὕπνος δέ με λέ(ξ)ας ταχὺν ἀπεκόμισε φί[λ]ην γ[η]ν·  
 ρεῖθροις ἐδόκουν γὰρ ποταμοῦ σῶμα ἀπο[λο]ύειν,  
 ἱκανοῖς ἀπὸ Νίλου γλυκεροῦ ὕδασι προσ[η]νῶς·  
 φόμπην δὲ σεμνὴν Μουσῶν Καλλιέπειαν 15  
 Νύμφας ἅμα πάσαις μέσ(σ)ην κῶμον αἰδεῖν·  
 Ἑλλάδος τι κἀγὼ βραχὺ λείψανον νομίζων,  
 γραπτὸν ἀπὸ σοφῆς ἔπνευσα ψυχῆς μου νόημα·  
 ῥάβδῳ δέ τις οἶα κατὰ μέλος δέμας δονηθεῖς,  
 ἄρμογην μέλει συνεργὸν ἐπεκάλουν χαράττειν, 20  
 ψόγον ἄλλοτρίοις ἤθεσιν ἀπολιπὼν ἄδηλον.  
 ἀρχὴ δέ μ' ἔκληζεν τὸ σοφὸν ποίημα λέξαι·  
 λαμπρὸς τότε Μάνδουλις ἔβη μέγας ἀπ' Ὀλύμπου,  
 θέλων βαρβαρικὴν λέξιν ἀπ' Αἰθιόπων,  
 καὶ γλυκερὴν ἔσπευσεν ἐφ' Ἑλλάδα μοῦσαν ἀεῖσαι, 25  
 λαμπρὰ παρεια φέρων καὶ δεξιὸς Ἰσιδι βαίνων,  
 Ῥωμαίων μεγέθει δόξαν ἀγαλλόμενος,  
 μαντικά πυθίων ἄτε δὴ θεὸς Οὐλύμποιο·  
 ὥς βίος ἀνθρώποις προορώμενος ἐξέθεν αὐχεῖ,  
 ὥς ἡμᾶρ καὶ νῦν σε σέβει, ὦραι δ' ἅμα πάσαι, 30  
 καὶ καλέουσί σε Βρεῖθ καὶ Μάνδουλιν συνομαίμους,  
 ἄστρα θεῶν ἐπίσημα κατ' οὐρανὸν ἀντέλλοντα.  
 καὶ τάδε σοι στεῖχοντα χαράσσειν μ' αὐτὸς ἔλεξας  
 καὶ σοφὰ γράμματα πᾶσιν ἀθωπεύτως ἐσορᾶσθαι.

35

[εἴκοσι] καὶ δυσὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος.

1 EBHN Mahaffy-Sayce, Gauthier : EBAN Sayce | HPEMIHC Gauthier : HPEMIAC Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, omnes ante Gauthier || 2 ἄερί τ(ε)–ἐπανεῖ(τ)αι Bury || 3 βιοτῇ Weil, Kaibel, Gauthier (1910: 70), Totti | ΠANTOΘEN Gauthier : ΠANTOCΘEN Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, πάντο(σ)θεν Mahaffy-Sayce || 4 ἐλέγχ(ει)ν Bury, Totti || 5 KIKΛHCKE Gauthier : KEKΛHCKE Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, κέκλησκε Weil, Longo,

(τότ' ἐ)κ(ί)κλησε Bury, (τότε) κ(ί)κλησε Rohde || **8** δῆλον ὅτ(ι) Weil || **9** ΕΛΙΚΩΝΙ Gauthier, Ἐλικῶνι Totti, Ἐλίκωνι Bernand, Brandi : ΕΛΙΚΩΝ Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, ἑλίκων Weil, Rohde, Kaibel, Manteuffel, Longo | ΧΛΟΗC Sayce, Gauthier, χλοῖης Kaibel, Manteuffel : ΧΛΩΗC Mahaffy-Sayce, χλώης Longo | ἀνθ(ι)μον ... κῶμον vel ἀνθεμον ... κῶμο(υ) Weil | ἀ(ν)ετίναξα κό(σ)μον dub. Kaibel || **11** ἐπὶ φόβον Gauthier (1910: 70) || **12** ΜΕΛΕΨΑC Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, corr. Manteuffel : με λ(ί)ψας dub. Rohde : με <κ>λέψας Bury, Weil, Kaibel, Longo, Totti : ΜΕΛΕΙΨΑC Gauthier, με λείψας Gauthier (1910: 70) | Φ . . . HN Mahaffy-Sayce (φι . . . ην Kaibel), ΦΙ . . . PHN Sayce, suppl. Weil : φ[ορετό]ν dub. Bury : φ[ορήδ]ην dub. Rohde: ΦΡ . . . ΤΡΗΝ dub. Gauthier || **13** σῶμ' ἀπ[ ] metri causa Weil || **13–14** suppl. edd. prr. || **14** γλυκερο(ίς) dub. Weil, Manteuffel | προσ[η]νοῦς Bury || **15** ΩΡΜΗΝΔΕ Gauthier, ὥρμην δὲ Gauthier (1910: 70) : ΩΟΜΗΝΗΝΔΕ Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, ὥμην ἡνίδε Rodhe, ὥρμην{ην} δὲ Bury, Weil || **16** ΝΥΜΦΑΙC Mahaffy-Sayce : ΝΙΔΕΨΑΙC Sayce | ΜΕΧΝΚΩΜΟΝ Mahaffy-Sayce, suppl. metri causa edd. prr. : μέσσην κῶμον Longo, Totti : ΜΕΧΝ ΝΩΜΟΝ Sayce, (ἐ)μὲ σύ(ν)γ(ν)ωμον Weil : duas solas litteras ΑΠ legere potuit Gauthier || **17** ΚΑΓΩΒΡΑΧΥ Gauthier : ΚΑΠΟΒΡΑΧΥ Mahaffy-Sayce, κᾶπο βραχύ Manteuffel, Weil, Kaibel, Longo : ΚΑΤΑΒΡΑΧΥ Sayce | <κ>ομίζων Rohde || **18** {γ}ραπτὸν Bury | ἀπὸ σοφῆς ψυχῆς μου ἴνευσα νόημα vel ψυχῆς ἔπνευσα νόημα metri causa Bury || ΔΟΝΗCΕΙC Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, ΔΟΝΗCΕ . . . Gauthier, corr. Kaibel || **20** ΜΕΛΕΙCΥΝΕΡΓΟΝ Gauthier : ΜΕΛΕΙCΥΝΕΡΓΟΝ Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, corr. edd. prr. | σύνεργον Kaibel, Manteuffel | ΧΑ . . . ΤΤΕΙΝ Gauthier : ΧΑΡΑΤΤΕΙC Mahaffy-Sayce, ΧΑΡΑΠΕΙC Sayce, χαράττει(ν) Bury : χαράττει(ων) vel χαρά(ξει) dub. Rohde : χαρά(ξ)ει(ς) Weil || **22** ΑΡΧΗΔΕΜΕΚΛΗΖΕΠΟCΤΟCΟΦΟΝ Mahaffy-Sayce (qui ΠΟC del.), Sayce, ἀρχὴ δέ μ' ἔκλιζ' ἔπος τὸ σοφὸν Longo, corr. Bury, qui malit ἀρχὴ δ' ἐ(π)έκλιζε (μ)ο(υ) σοφὸν ποῖημα λέξει : ἀρχὴ δέ μ' ἔκλιζέν π(ω)ς (vel τις vel -ζεν τότε) τὸ σοφὸν dub. Rohde : ἀρχὴ δέ μ' ἔκλιζ' ἐπ(ί) τὸ σοφὸν vel ἔκλιζε π(ρ)ὸς σοφὸν Weil : ἀρχῇ δέ μ' ἔκλιζ' ἔπος τὸ σοφὸν Merkelbach, Totti : ἀρχῇ(ν) δέ μ' ἔκλιζ' (ᾧ)τε τὸ σοφὸν dub. Kaibel : ΑΡΧΗΔΕΜΕΚΛΗΖΕΝΤΟCΟΦΟΝ Gauthier, ἀρχῇ δέ με κλήζεντο σοφὸν Gauthier (1910: 70), ἀρχὴ δέ μ' ἔκλιζετο τὸ σοφὸν Manteuffel | ΠΟΙΗΜΑ Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce : ΠΟΗΜΑ Gauthier || **23** Μανδοῦλις Totti || **25** ΓΑΥΚΕΡΗΝ Sayce, Gauthier : ΓΑΥΚΕΡΑΝ Mahaffy-Sayce, γλυκεράν Rohde, Kaibel, Manteuffel || **27** ΔΟΞΑΝ Gauthier : ΔΟΤΑΝ Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, δ' ο(ί) ἄν Weil, Rohde, Kaibel, Manteuffel || **28** ΟΥΛΥΜΠΟΙΟ Mahaffy-Sayce, Gauthier : ΟΛΥΜΠΟΙΟ Sayce || **29** post αὐχεῖ signum varie descriptum || **30** ὥραϊ <θ>' ἄμα πᾶσαι Rohde || **31** Σεβρεῖθ Rohde, dub. Kaibel, Longo | Μανδοῦλιν Totti || **32** ΕΠΙCΗΜΑ Gauthier : ΕΝCΗΜΑ Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, ἐν σῆμα Weil, Kaibel, Manteuffel, Longo | ΑΝΤΕΛΛΟΝΤΑ Mahaffy-Sayce : ΑΝΤΕΛΛΟΝΤΑ Gauthier || **34** ΚΑΙCΟΦΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑΠΑCΙΝΑΘΩΠΕΥΤΩCΕCΟΡΑCΘΑΙ Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce : ΚΑΙCΟΦΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑΠΑΡΑΘΕΟΙCΜΕΓΙCΤΟΙCΕCΟΡΑCΘΑΙ Gauthier (1910: 69) (ΜΕΓΙCΤΟΙCΕCΟΡΑCΘΑΙ Gauthier 1911: 2.239), καὶ σοφὰ γράμματα παρὰ θεοῖς μεγίστοις ἐσορᾶσθαι dub. Gauthier (1910: 71) || **35–36** a Gauthier visi : om. Mahaffy-Sayce, Sayce, Weil, Rohde, Kaibel, Longo || **35** [οὔνομ' ἐμὸν γνώση δις καὶ δέ]κα καὶ δύο π[ρώτων] Peek : — — — — — [εἴκοσι] Totti, fortasse recte || **36** . . . ΚΑΚΑΙΔΥCΙ . . . Gauthier, suppl. Bernand : [στοίχων] τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος Peek : καὶ δυσὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος Totti, fortasse recte

## 9.

MONUMENT: wall inscription at the Serapeum.

PROVENANCE: Stratonicea, Caria.

DATE: “mittlere Kaiserzeit” (Merkelbach and Stauber *ad SGO* 1.02/06/20).<sup>15</sup>

GENRE: mnemonic verses about the local calendar.

LINES: 12 verses and one line *extra metrum*.

METRE: iambic trimeters (lines 10–11 are incorrect; line 4 *scriptio plena* in elision ἴνα).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: “expanded” name (Μένιππος εὖρε<sup>16</sup>).

LAYOUT: lines correspond to verses; the number of the letters of each verse corresponds to the number of days of each month of the year: this play requires the forced insertion of a letter at line 6 (ἀριθμῆσας) and the deletion of a letter at line 5 (παρησίαν).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *CIG* 2.2722 (Böckh) with further bibliography; *IGLAM* 514 (Le Bas and Waddington); *EG* 1096 (Kaibel); Vogt 1967: 90; *IStratonikeia* 1044 (Sahin); Courtney 1990: 10; *SGO* 1.02/06/20 (Merkelbach and Stauber); Luz 2010: 63–65.

PHOTO: one photo was published by Robert (1937: pl. XIX).

|                                              |       |    |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|----|
| [μ]νημόσυνον ἀνθρώποις τόδ' ἡμε]ρήσιον       | λ[α'] |    |
| [ε]ὔρον, μετρήσας μουσ[ικῶ συντ]άγματι       | λ'    |    |
| νέμ(ω)ν τ' ἐκάτερον, μῆνα[ς ἡδ'] ἐπεμβόλους, | λα'   |    |
| ἴνα, ἄν τις ἔτυχε τῆς ἀπαιδεύτου τύχης       | λ[α'] |    |
| παρησίαν ὁμοίαν οὐκ ἔχων βροτοῖς,            | κη'   | 5  |
| παρηγορεῖται βαιὼν ἀριθμῆσας τάδε.           | λα'   |    |
| [ο]ὔτως ἔγραψα τοῖς φίλοισι χρήσιμον.        | λ'    |    |
| σύ μοι, Πρόνοια, λοιπὸν εἰς τὸ δεῦτερον      | λα'   |    |
| εὐπερινόητον ἡδὺν ἀγγεῖλαι στίχον.           | λ'    |    |
| ὑπερτάτοις γὰρ ἡμῶν εὐχὴν Ἥρη καὶ Διὶ        | λα'   | 10 |
| ῥέμβην ὁδῶ περάσας τὴν ἐτησίαν χάριν         | [λα'] |    |
| εὐδαιμονήσας δέλτον ἀνατιθῶ θεο[ίς].         | [λ']  |    |
| (ἔτους), ἀφε'                                |       |    |

1–2 suppl. Böckh || 3 NEMONTEKATEPONMHNA[c. 3]ΕΠΕΜΒΟΛΟΥΣ corr. et suppl. Kaibel : ν]έμον τ' ἐκάτερον μῆνα [καὶ] ἐπεμβόλους Le Bas and Waddington : νόμι]μόν τε <χ>ἄτερον μῆν' [ἡδ' ἐ]πεμβόλους Böckh (νόμι]μόν Chishull) || 7 suppl. Böckh (nescio an quis antea) || 8 σύ μο(υ) προνοία Böckh || 11 ῥεμβηνόδω Böckh, Le Bas and Waddington, Kaibel || 12 suppl. ed. pr.

15 The last line of the inscription has a number (ἀφε', 1505), which is regarded by Sahin and Merkelbach and Stauber as follows: “Dies bezieht sich vermutlich auf irgendeine (pseudo)historisch-mythologische Ära, welche mit der Besiedlung Kariens in der mykenischen Zeit begann” (Sahin, *ad IStratonikeia* 1044.13).

16 Böckh (*ad loc.*) suggests recognizing here the rhetor *Menippus Stratonicensis* mentioned by Cic. *Brut.* 315: see also Strab. 14.2.25 (4.76 Radt).



## 10.

MONUMENT: funerary stele.

PROVENANCE: Egypt, perhaps Thebes.

DATE: second century AD (see Bernand *ad IMEG* 75 p. 306 n. 1).

GENRE: funerary epigram.

LINES: 38.

METRE: elegiacs (lines 1–12, 15–16), hexameters (13–14 and 17), the rest illegible (line 5 consonantalization of iota in Δημητρίου, line 11 παραίνει is *contra metrum*, line 13 *scriptio plena* in elision ὅτι).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: “expanded” name (Ὠριγένης Δημήτριος [= Δημήτριος] πατὴρ [= πατρί] καὶ μητρί εὐθυμε[ί]ν).

LAYOUT: lines correspond to verses; left-aligned lines on two columns.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *GVI* 1198 (Peek); Merkelbach 1959: 136–137; *IMEG* 75 (Bernand) with a complete bibliography; Schubert 2004: 115. See also Garulli 2008: 639–640.

PHOTO: a photo of the stone was published by Bernand in *IMEG* as pl. LIV, a photo of Merkelbach’s squeeze as pl. LIII.

PLACEMENT/STATE: private collection.

|                                                           |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ὦ πάτερ, εἴ με ποθεῖς, μετάθου {τῆς} λύπης, ἵκετεύω,      |    |
| ῥητὸν γὰρ δάνος ἦν τοῦθ' ὅπερ εἶδα φάος·                  |    |
| ἴσθι δὲ τοῦτο σαφῶς, ὅτι τοῦτο πεπρωμένον ἦν μοι          |    |
| γεννηθέντι, θανεῖν εἴκοσι πρὶν ἐτέων.                     |    |
| ἐγγὺς μὲν ναῖω Δημητρίου τοῦ φιλαδέλφου,                  | 5  |
| νῦν τὸν ἴσον τούτῳ χωρὸν ἄλυπον ἔχων·                     |    |
| ἡ Λήθη δέ μ' ἔπαυσε σαφῶς χ(αλ)επῶν δὲ μεριμνῶν.          |    |
| σοὶ δὲ παραινετικῶς τοῦτο, πάτερ, προλέγω·                |    |
| δεῖ γὰρ πάντας ὑπὸ φθιμένοις ζωοὺς καταβῆναι·             |    |
| ἡ <sup>17</sup> γοῦν μοι πείθη(ι), καὶ σὺ μέτελθε γόων,   | 10 |
| μητρὶ φύλη(ι) δὲ παραίνει τὸ τὰς λύπας ἀποθέσθαι·         |    |
| ἡγεῖται δὲ βροτῶν πανδαμάτωρ [ὁ Χρ]όνος.                  |    |
| τοῦτο δέ σοι πέμπω παραμύθι[ον ὥς], ὅτι ἀλύπως,           |    |
| ῥητῶς ἔσχα τρυφὴν πρὶν εἰς Ἀ[ίδη]ν μ' ἀναλύσαι·           |    |
| ἦχα γὰρ ἀφθονίαν παρὰ σοί, [σπάνι]ν οὐ μεμάθηκα,          | 15 |
| οὐδέ ποτ' ἐν βίῳ τῳ μόχθον . . . . C ἔχω.                 |    |
| σοὶ δὲ γ[έν]οιτο βιο(ῶ)ν καὶ λο[γ]ιπὸν ἔτι π[ρ]οκομίζειν. |    |
| πῶς δέ σ' ἐγὼ πείσω, ΚΑΛΟ— — — — — τελευτᾶν               |    |
| Αἶσα μόνον, ζωῆς ΠΡΙ— — — — — ΑΘΕΙΝ.                      |    |
| τοῦτο γὰρ ρ— — — — —                                      | 20 |
| ῥητῶς γὰρ— — — — —                                        |    |
| ἡ γὰρ παιδ— — — — —                                       |    |
| κλαίων αν— — — — —                                        |    |
| ἄλλα θεοι— — — — —                                        |    |
| ΠHC νεότη[τος]— — — — —                                   | 25 |
| μηδὲν ρ— — — — —                                          |    |

17 Ἡ = εἰ, following the pronunciation current in Graeco-Roman Egypt at that time.

|              |       |    |
|--------------|-------|----|
| ἡδη γὰρ Ι    | _____ |    |
| Τιτάν οὐ     | _____ |    |
| ῥητῶς ρ      | _____ |    |
| ἴσθι δὲ κ[α] | _____ | 30 |
| εἰ δὲ βα     | _____ |    |
| ῥμεῖς ε      | _____ |    |
| θρηνο        | _____ |    |
| ῥμῖν         | _____ |    |
| μηκέ[τι      | _____ | 35 |
| εὐθυ         | _____ |    |
| . λε         | _____ |    |
| νεκ[ταρ      | _____ |    |

1 del. Peek || 7 Λήθη <μ>ἐ(ν) Merkelbach | ΧΛΑΕΠΩΝ corr. Tod (a Bernand laud.), Peek | <μ>ε μεριμνῶν Merkelbach | 9 ὑποφθιμένοις Merkelbach || 10 ἡ γ' οὖν Peek | ΠΕΙΘΗΚΑΙ suppl. || 11 ΦΙΛΗΝ corr. Peek | παραινείτ(ω) λύπας Merkelbach || 12–15 suppl. Tod (a Peek laud.) || 15 IHXA Merkelbach || 16 ἔχω(ν) Peek || 17 suppl. et corr. (BIOIN) Tod (a Peek laud.) || 18 καλο[ίς ὅτι νεῖμε] Peek || 19 πρὶν κακότητα μ]σθεῖν; Peek || 22 Ι-ΓΑΡ Merkelbach || 24 ἀλλὰ θεσ[ ed. pr. || 25 Ι-CNEOTH] Merkelbach : HCNEOTH[ alii | suppl. ed. pr. || 30 suppl. Peek || 35 suppl. Tod (a Bernand laud.) || 37 [ί]λε Peek || 38 suppl. Tod (a Bernand laud.)

## 11.

MONUMENT: alabaster stele, now broken in two fragments; the text examined belongs to the inferior part.

SIZE: the fragment considered is 86 cm high, 81 cm wide and 25 cm thick.

PROVENANCE: kôm of Sakha, northern Delta, Egypt.

DATE: end of the second century AD (see Bernand *ad IMEG* 108 p. 415 n. 1).

GENRE: dedicatory epigram, part of a bilingual inscription (the demotic text is acrostic too).

LINES: 9.

METRE: sotadeans.

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: name (genitive: Μοσχίωνος).

LAYOUT: lines correspond to verses; left-aligned lines; the letters which form the acrostic are engraved before the beginning of the verse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Koch 1926: 29 (fr. 16); *IMEG* 108 V (Bernand) with a complete bibliography; Luz 2010: 40–42.

PHOTO: an excellent photo of the inscription was published by Bernand in *IMEG* pl. LXXXVII, together with a reconstruction of the stele (pl. LXXV) and a photo of the upper fragment.

PLACEMENT/STATE: Berlin Museum, Egyptian collections inv. no. 2135.

|          |                                               |   |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Μ</b> | μή με θαυμάσις, εἰ πολύχωρος οὐς' ἄδηλον      |   |
| <b>Ο</b> | ῥμασιν φέρω φαντασίην· οὐ δύναται γὰρ         |   |
| <b>Σ</b> | στοιχεῖά τις εὐγνώστα τιθεῖς μὴ οὐκ ἀποκρύψαι |   |
| <b>Χ</b> | χώρην ἵνα τῷ θέλοντι καὶ πλάνην παράσχη.      |   |
| <b>Ι</b> | ἵνα δὲ μὴ μακρὴν κείς ἄπορον τράπηις ἀταρπών, | 5 |

Ω ὥς ἂν ἱσαρίθμων Πιερίσιν στίχων κατάσχης  
 Ν νοῦν, ἀποκνίσας εὐξύνετον γράμμι' ἀφ' ἐκάστου,  
 Ο ὄρμησον ἐφ' ἣν τέθεικε χειραγωγὸν ἀρχήν·  
 Σ σημανεῖ γάρ, εἰ πύθοιο, κτὴν ὀρθὸν ἔχῃς νοῦν.

## 12.

MONUMENT: “*stèle* of a grave with a pediment which is adorned with *acroteria* on each side” (more details in Schwabe 1954: 99–100); “the stone was built into the façade in a conspicuous place, possibly above the entrance” (Schwabe 1954: 103).

SIZE: the surviving fragment is 60 cm high, 54 cm wide, 7.5 cm thick.

PROVENANCE: Jifna, Palestine.

DATE: the script suggests that the inscription should be dated between AD 22/23 and AD 150 (Schwabe 1954: 114); second/third century AD (Peek).<sup>18</sup>

GENRE: funerary epigram.

LINES: 12 verses on 24 lines.

METRE: elegiacs.

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: “expanded” name (Ῥοῦφος ἔκτισε).

LAYOUT: “the part of the verse in excess of each line is centred beneath it in the middle in such a way that the distance from each side of the overflowing line to the frame is about the same” (Schwabe 1954: 100).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Schwabe 1954; *GVI* 1185 (Peek); *GG* 274 (Peek); *SGO* 4.21/11/01 (Merkelbach and Stauber); Luz 2010: 36–38.

PHOTO: an excellent photo was published by Schwabe (1954: pl. 2).

PLACEMENT/STATE: Jerusalem, Rockefeller Museum, inv. no. S 839.

ῤυσαλέης γραίης καμάτων ἀνά|πανμὰ με λεύσεις, |  
 οἶκον, ὃν ἰδρύσας τῆσδ' ἀνέ|θηκε τέκος, |  
 ὕστατον ἀνθρώποις, ἥδ' ὃν πό|νον, εἰκόνα δόξης, |  
 φαινόμενον ζωοῖς τερπνό|τατον λιμένα. |  
 ὅστις γὰρ ναίει με, πόνων μό|χθων τε πέπνυται, | 5  
 σῆς δ' ἐσορᾶς βιοτῆς πουλύ με | τερπνότερον. |  
 ἔν δὲ τέλος πάντων, σειγὴ μία· | κοινὸς ὁ πλοῦτος |  
 καὶ πενία παρ' ἐμοί, πᾶσι πέφυ|κα δ' ἴσος. |  
 ταῦτα μαθὼν, ὧ ξεῖνε, τὰ γράμ|ματα τῆσδ' ἀπὸ δέλτου |  
 ἴσθ', ὅτι Μοιράων ὁ σκοπὸς ἐσ|τὶν ὅδε. | 10  
 σῆμα δὲ σοί, Νικώ, κτίσ|του δ' ὅ|νομ' εὐθὺ μαθήσῃ |  
 [ἔξ ἀκροστιχί]δος λαϊνέας. | [πάραγε].

7 κοινὸς ὁ πλοῦτος Peek : σὸν τῷδ[ε]. Πλοῦτος Schwabe || 11 Νικώ Peek : Νησώ Schwabe || 12 suppl. Peek : [Ἔ . . . . .] ἄσος λαϊνέας [ἀναγνού]ς dub. Schwabe

18 The stone was suspected of being a forgery from the very time of its arrival at the Rockefeller Museum in 1921, but Schwabe (1954: 117–118) demonstrated that in view of its epigraphical, stylistic and orthographical features the inscription cannot be considered as a forgery; rather “we are dealing here with an original gravestone, preserving a handsome testimony from a comparatively early period in the epigrammatic poetry of Hellenized Palestine” (p. 119).

## 13.

MONUMENT: “vir, cui hoc sepulcrum dicatum, Musarum Tei maxime cultarum videtur κλειδοῦχος fuisse et in Musarum τεμένει publice sepultus esse” (Böckh *ad loc.*); *contra* Robert 1959: 1665: “si la charge de ‘porte-clef’ se multiplie et prend plus d’importance dans les cultes grecs ou orientaux ... il serait paradoxal qu’il y eût un cleidouque des Muses puisque ces divinités n’ont pas normalement de temples, édifices fermant à clef”.

PROVENANCE: Seferihisar, near Teos, Ionia.

DATE: third/fourth century AD (Peek).

GENRE: funerary epigram.

LINES: 10.

METRE: elegiacs (line 1 *corruptio Attica* μῆ, line 10 *scriptio plena* in elision φύλε).

CONTENT OF THE ACROSTIC: name (nominative: Ἀλέσ[ανδ]ρο[ς]<sup>19</sup>).

LAYOUT: lines do not correspond to verses.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Welcker 1836: 412–314 (no. 27); *CIG* 2.3123 (Böckh); *EG* 226 (Kaibel); Röhl 1883: 77; Gomperz 1912: 183–185; *GVI* 967 (Peek); Robert 1959: 1664–1666; *SGO* 1.03/06/02 (Merkelbach and Stauber).

PHOTO: text based on Sherard’s copy published by Böckh in *CIG* 2.3123.

PLACEMENT/STATE: lost.

Ἀλκείδου με τραφέντα φύλοις ἐ[νὶ γυ]μνασίοισιν  
 λυπηρὸς δαίμων (ῥ)πασεν αἰφ[ύ]ιδι[ος]  
 εἴκοσι γὰρ καὶ πέντε μόνους λυκάβαντας ὁδεύ[ας]  
 σκ(ῆ)νος νῦν κείμαι Πλουτέος ἐμ μελ(ά)θοις | 5  
 [ἀ]φθάρτοις· μούσαις γὰρ (ρ) ἐπ(έ)σ[τεφ]ον αὐτὸς ἐμ[.]ε[.] |  
 [ν] .ινολεως (ῥ)νθεν νύμφιος οὐ (γ)ε(ν)ό(μ)ην·  
 [δαί] (μ)ων γὰρ κληδοῦχ(ος) [ἀ]πέσπασεν οὐκ ἐθέ(λ)οντα |  
 ῥη(ῖ)δ(ω)ς μητρὸς καὶ πατρὸς ἐκ θαλάμῳ |  
 οἱ νῦν οὐκέτ’ ἔχουσ(ιν) ἐμὸν θάλας, ἀλλὰ πα(ρ)ρχο[ν] |  
 [σ]τὰς φύλ]ε δδ(ο)ιπὸρε πᾶς, τοῦνομα διζόμενος. | 10

1 suppl. Kaibel : [ἐν γυ]μνασίοισιν Böckh, Welcker ll 2 –ΕΠΙΑΣΕΝΑΙΦΙ[ ]]ΟΣ, (ῥ)πασεν αἰφν[ύ]ιδι[ος] Kaibel : (ῥ)πασεν [α]ἰφ[ν]ιδί[ω]ς Böckh, Welcker, Peek ll 4 ΣΚΙΝΟΣ–ΜΕΛΙΘΟΙΣ corr. Böckh ll 5 [ἀ]φθάρτοις Böckh l ΓΑΙ corr. Böckh l ΕΠΙΣ . . ΟΝΑΥΤΟΣΕΜ . Ε . corr. et suppl. Kaibel, qui in fine ἐμ[αυτόν] : ἐπίσ[τι]ον αὐτὸς ἔμ’ [ἀστῶν] Gomperz : ἐπίσ[τι]ον αὐτὸς ἔ[νεμ]ε[ν] (vel etiam ἔδειμεν) Böckh, ἐπίσ[τι]ον αὐτὸς ἔ[.]ε[.] Welcker : ἐπι[σπ]ῶν αὐτὸς ἔ[ρωτας] Peek ll 6 . ΝΟΛΕΩΣΝΟ ΕΝΝΥΜΦΙΟΣΟΥΣΕΜΟΝΗΝ corr. Böckh ((ῥ)νθεν) et Kaibel ((γ)ε(ν)ό(μ)ην) : [νεῖμ’] ὁ λεώς· (ῥ)νθεν νυμφίος οὐ (γ)ε(ν)ό(μ)ην Gomperz : [σῆμ’] ὁ λεώς, (ῥ)νθεν Νύμφιος . . . μόνῃ dub. Böckh : [εἰς] Ἀ[ἰ]δεω ἐλθὼν νυμφίος οὐ γενόμεν Peek ll 7 . . . ΝΩΝΓΑΡΚΑΛΗΔΟΥΧΩΙ[ . . . . . ]ΕΘΕΙΟΝΤΑ corr. et suppl. Röhl, qui κληδοῦχ(ον) scripsit, κληδοῦχ(ος) Robert : [δει]νὼν γὰρ κληδοῦχ(ον) [ἔ]ρωος φύγεν οὐκ ἐθέ(λ)οντα vel [δει]νὼν γὰρ κληδοῦχ(ον) [ἄ]γας, Χάρον, οὐκ ἐθέ(λ)οντα Gomperz : [Μου]σῶν γὰρ κληδοῦχ(ον) [ἔ]ρωος φύγε οὐκ ἐθέ(λ)οντα Kaibel ([Μου]σῶν), Wilamowitz (reliqua suppl., teste Kaibel) : [Μου]σῶν γὰρ κληδοῦχο[ν] [ἀ]πήγαγε οὐκ ἐθέλ(οντα) Peek : [ζῶ]ν[ ] [τ]ὼν γὰρ κληδοῦχ(ον) [ἐκλήρωσάν μ’] ἐθέ(λ)οντα dub. Böckh : [τ]ὼν γὰρ

19 See n. 24 below.

14.

ante v. 1 lacunam post. Letronne || **1** ΠΑΝΤΟCNCΦΙΙΞΙΚΑΙ corr. Letronne : πάντ(ως  
ἢ) σφίγς καί Franz || **2** ΚΩΜΑΙΑΡΚΡΝΟΕΙCΩΦΟCΟΠΕΡ corr. Franz ((σ)ῶμα γὰρ  
(εἰ) νοέεις) et Letronne ((ῦ)σος (θ' ὅ)περ) : (σ)ῶμα γὰρ (εἰ) νοέεις (σὺ) σφ(ῶ)ς ὅπερ  
Kaibel || **3** ΦΑCΜΑΤΟC . ΙΕΘΙΟ corr. Bernard : φάσματος (ἔξ) ιερωτο Kaibel : φάσ-  
ματος εὐέργυιο Letronne : (πλ)άσματος εὐ(ὄ)π(ο)ιο Franz || **4** ΙΕΡΟΝ . . . ΕΦ corr. Le-

20 This is the first editor's comment: "it appears to have been a description of the Sphinx, but is very obscure" (Vyse 1842: 118 *ad* pl. F fig. 1).

tronne || 5 ΓΥΡΑ corr. Letronne || 6 . CINON corr. Carrez-Maratray : <δ>εινὸν Franz, Kaibel | K<sup>V</sup>EN corr. Franz : κεν Letronne | NPEKEC >EITICTCNOTICEI corr. Franz : τις <ἀτ>ρεκέως γε νο(ῆ)σει Letronne || 7 TNCXEIT initium : <ῆ>νέχ(θη) Carrez-Maratray : ταῖς[— — Letronne : <ῶφι>ν <ῆ>χει <δ>εινῶπος ἐπὼν(υ)μον Ἡ(φαιστεί)νας Franz : <ῶφι>ν <ῆ>χει [— — Kaibel || 8 [δ — — Carrez-Maratray || 9 CTΩIEEACAI IΩNEXAPAΞA corr. Letronne : <ῆ>γ(ω)γ(ε) <Σ>α(ρ)απίων ἐχάραξα Franz, Kaibel : ἐσθλῆς αὐτὰρ ἔ(γ)ω(γ)ε <θ>εᾶς <εἰκ>ῶν ἐχάραξα M. Szymański

#### 4. A Preliminary Description

14 texts have been collected which follow the principles adopted: they are a merely representative sample, not only because these are the non-Christian inscribed acrostic poems brought to the readers' attention by the secondary literature concerned with this topic, but also because, generally speaking, any statistic in this field is necessarily provisional, as a new acrostic may be detected also in inscriptions already known and published. Only a complete and systematic examination of all the surviving verse inscriptions could define the phenomenon in a more precise and reliable way. Nonetheless, within such a small corpus some trends can be noticed.

In terms of chronology, none of the poems considered is earlier than the Hellenistic age, and, more precisely, than the third century BC. Apart from 4 texts dating between the third century BC and the first century AD, all the inscriptions belong to the first centuries of the imperial age (first–fourth century AD). The geographical context of these texts is equally clear-cut and coherent: out of 14 cases, 7 come from the near or far Greek East, 6 from Egypt, and only 1 from an Aegean island. As many as 7 texts out of 14 are epitaphs; 6 are concerned with worship (1 hymn, 2 dedicatory epigrams and 3 *proskynemata*<sup>21</sup>), and most of this group (5 of the 6) come from Egypt. Text no. 9 can hardly fit in with the traditional categories of inscriptions: but since it includes a prayer, it can perhaps be considered as belonging to the second group.<sup>22</sup> Most poems (9 out of 14) are composed in elegiac couplets, only one entirely in hexameters, one in iambic trimeters and one in priapeans; 2 texts are in sotadeans.<sup>23</sup> The monuments fol-

21 *Proskynemata* are described by Burstein (1998: 47) as “epigraphical substitutes for a worshipper that would enable him or her to perpetually benefit from the holiness of a particular place”.

22 As Luz (2010: 58–63) points out, *P. Par.* 1 contains a calendar poem similar to that of Menippos.

23 The use of sotadeans in 2 acrostic poems is remarkable: this choice might not be unrelated to the sometimes cryptic or enigmatic character of this verse (see e.g. Bettini 1982: 66–69).

low different patterns according to their purposes, and various materials are employed: in size, the largest measures between 80 and 130 cm. We are dealing with visible but not grand monuments.

## 5. A Closer Look at the Acrostic

Even a rapid survey of the texts collected shows that all the acrostics include a personal name, and in most cases the acrostic contains not only a personal name, but something more (9 cases out of 14). The mere name is found usually in funerary texts, whereas a longer and more complex message belongs mostly to other inscriptions.

Looking at the acrostics made up of a *mere name*, one must distinguish between those with a name in the nominative (no. 1, 7, 13<sup>24</sup>) and those with a name in the genitive (no. 5, 11). The same case may refer to different persons and roles: indeed the nominative indicates sometimes the dead person (no. 13), sometimes someone who is certainly not the deceased and may be either the client or – more likely – the author of the poem (no. 1,<sup>25</sup> certainly no. 7); as for the genitive, it may imply terms such as σῆμα (see e.g. what the poem itself suggests in no. 5.12), μνήμα or ἀνάθημα (no. 11); in both cases it deals with the prominent figure of the monument. In the poetic texts themselves, however, there is always some – direct or indirect – help to the reader, making the acrostic more understandable (see below).

The *complex acrostics* are very short sentences, including a subject (usually the proper name) and a verb. They are as follows:

no. 2 Ἡρόδ[ω]ρος [Ἀρ]τέμωνος [Σελε]υκεὺς τῶν π[ρὸς τῷ Εὐλαΐῳ  
νικητῆς γέ]γονε τ[

no. 8 Μάξιμος δεκουρίων ἔγραψα

24 The acrostic of text no. 13 reads Ἀλέσανδρος instead of Ἀλέξανδρος; for this spelling see Wilhelm 1932: 802 and Robert 1957: 366 n. 3. See also text no. 5, lines 5 and 7.

25 Nothing in this text (no. 1) seems to help the reader to understand the role of the person named in the acrostic: the only men mentioned in the lines are Martha's father Demosthenes and her brother. The latter might be the Sarapion mentioned in the acrostic, perhaps as the dedicator of the monument, but one must take into consideration that: (1) in line 1 θέσαν seems to imply more than one dedicator; (2) it would be relatively unusual for the client not to make clear his own role; as will be demonstrated below, the text itself, when necessary, gives some clues for understanding the message of the acrostic correctly. As for the man featured in the relief, he belongs to a traditional pattern, and does not imply any specific connection with Martha's family or life. Furthermore, that the stele had been bought as a ready-made piece is confirmed by the layout of the inscribed text, which extends outside the inscribed area.

no. 9 Μένιππος εὔρε

no. 10 Ὀριγένης Δημήτριος πατρὶ καὶ μητρὶ εὐθυμε[τῖ]ν

no. 12 Ῥοῦφος ἔκτισε.

In text no. 6, as Haussoullier first pointed out,<sup>26</sup> the sentence results from the association of an acrostic and a mesostic: Ἀπολλωνίδη, χαίρε.

Within the examined corpus only acrostics no. 4 (διὰ Σοφύτου τοῦ Ναράτου) and 3 (Κατλίου τοῦ καὶ Νικάνορος)<sup>27</sup> are noun phrases, without a verb. It is difficult to evaluate no. 14, as the initial part of the last lines is lost: one cannot know therefore what followed the subject.

The relationship between the *perspective* implied by the poem and that of the acrostic is various: in most cases one does not notice a clearly different *persona loquens*; however, in text no. 9, for example, in the verses the author expresses himself in the first person, but his signature in the acrostic is traditionally expressed in the third person. Likewise, in text no. 10 the content of the verses spoken by the deceased in the first person is summarized by the acrostic in the third person. Finally, in text no. 2, although no direct reference to a first person is found in the surviving lines, the address to the god (the Sun, perhaps Apollo himself)<sup>28</sup> in the second person suggests that the worshipper referred to himself as “me”. In other words, in both these cases the acrostic is used as a communication channel distinct from – and parallel to – the poem: it can give voice to a viewpoint different from the dead person’s or the dedicator’s, and to some extent “external”.

8 acrostics out of 14 seem to mention the *author* of the verses, who in almost all cases is personally involved in the monument, as dedicator (no. 2, 3, 7, 8,<sup>29</sup> 9,<sup>30</sup> 11) or even deceased and client at the same time (no.

26 Haussoullier 1898: 357: “l’impératif Χαίρε, gravé en caractères plus grands, se trouve au milieu et à la partie supérieure de l’inscription”. No mention of the mesostic is found in *GV* 1610, although Haussoullier’s article is quoted by Peek.

27 Barbieri (1975: 329) reads the acrostic Κατλίου τοῦ καὶ Νικάνορος as the family name followed by the *signum*, and so does Luz (2010: 44 n. 136), who translates: “Des Katilios, auch Nikanor genannt”.

28 See Garulli 2010: 71.

29 Wagner (1993) was the first who suggested that the Paccius Maximus mentioned as Paccius in acrostic no. 7 should be considered the same person as the Maximus mentioned in acrostic no. 8. Whether he was the author of the two poems or just the client cannot be established with certainty: however, the list of the inscribed epigrams with signature offered by Santin (2009: 296–297) shows that the verb γράφω is used for indicating the name of the poet. See also Mairs 2011: 283–288 and in this volume.

30 As for text no. 9, Courtney (1990: 10) observes that its acrostic “is less a claim to literary property than to the patent of a technical discovery, and in this sense has a certain analogy to the ‘seals’ of prose scientific works”.



4<sup>31</sup>); only in text no. 1 does Sarapion seem to be “only” the poet, not necessarily a relative of the deceased. 4 funerary acrostics (no. 5, 6, 10, 13) are devoted to the deceased, 1 (no. 12) celebrates the client and 1 (no. 14) mentions the creature portrayed. All in all, the acrostic seems not to be conceived as a sort of “signature field”: the name of the author of the text can usually appear in the acrostic *only if* it is at the same time the name of one of the persons celebrated by the monument, and the poet apparently is not one of them. This is especially interesting because it seems to be a relevant difference from literary acrostic poems (see Courtney 1990: 4).

In two cases the acrostic is combined with another graphic word-play: a telestic in no. 3 and a mesostic in no. 6.<sup>32</sup> In the former text the same message results from a syllabic acrostic and from the association of acrostic and telestic; in the latter case the message is divided between the acrostic and the mesostic, and whereas the acrostic is emphasized by verbal devices, the mesostic is emphasized by graphic devices (its letters are bigger and separated from the preceding letters by some space).<sup>33</sup> In one case (no. 11) the inscription includes more than one play (besides the acrostics, also a  $\pi\lambda\nu\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ <sup>34</sup>), but they are not related to one another; a similar case is text no. 9 (see below).

The acrostic seems to affect the *length* of the poem, as a large majority of the inscriptions examined is not more than 12 lines: there are only four exceptions, where acrostics extend to 20 lines (no. 4), 22 lines (no. 8 – here however the whole poem is even longer, and such a special setting is emphasized by the author himself at line 36, see below), in one case 38 lines (no. 10) and in another even more (no. 2). The number of verses usually corresponds to the number of letters making up the acrostic: this is not true for text no. 7, where the number of verses seems to be higher than that of the letters that form the acrostic; as for no. 8, the extension of the acrostic

31 For the meaning of the acrostic sentence  $\delta\iota\alpha\ \Sigma\omicron\phi\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \text{Ναράτου}$ , see Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004: 239–240; Santin 2009: 280–281. Hollis (2011: 113 and n. 43) considers it possible that Sophytos is also the composer of the poem “in view of the speaker’s pride in his Greek education”, but adds that “a competent local professional seems rather more likely”. Such a poem as Sophytos’ epitaph is apparently isolated within its context: other remarkable verse inscriptions found in the same area are presented by Hollis 2011: 109–112, but there are no true parallels to that epigram. In my opinion, such evidence makes Sophytos’ authorship appear more likely.

32 Both telestics and mesostics are rare and, when they appear, they are usually combined with acrostics (see Luz 2010: 1).

33 The letters of the word  $\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon$  are at the beginning of the second hemistich of the verses: in particular,  $\chi$ ,  $\alpha$ ,  $\epsilon$  follow immediately the caesura or diaeresis. But this is obviously not sufficient for all readers to see the word.

34 See Luz 2010: 40–41.

is clearly specified at the end of the poem (line 36); in text no. 5, the number of letters which form Aristodemos' name is an odd number, and cannot be equal to a definite number of elegiac couplets.<sup>35</sup>

The acrostic is an integral part of the text: nonetheless, one can notice some *verbal and non-verbal devices* for marking it. On the whole the non-marked acrostics are a minority (5): we must infer that acrostics are designed to be seen and read with little effort, not as a hidden message.

In two of the inscriptions examined the letters which form the acrostic are engraved before the beginning of the verse, so as to emphasize the resulting acrostic (no. 4 and 11); in two cases (no. 1 and 6) the first letters of the lines (or hemistichs), which compose the acrostic (or mesostic), are bigger than the following letters;<sup>36</sup> in one text (no. 2) both devices are combined; in inscription no. 12, since the inscribed area is not wide enough for the verse to fit into only one line, each verse is engraved in two lines and every second line is indented in order to emphasize the unity of the metrical line; in text no. 8 two horizontal strokes below the first letters of lines 7 and 22 seem to mark the main parts of the acrostic.<sup>37</sup>

In the remaining examples that allow us to examine the layout of the inscription, one line corresponds to one verse, and this is the sole layout which can make the acrostic recognizable.<sup>38</sup> Indeed one may add that in 8 inscriptions out of the 14 examined not only is there a stichic layout, but lines are also left-aligned, emphasizing the "vertical" text.

In order to emphasize the acrostic, it is not only graphic devices which are used: verbal messages calling the reader's attention to the presence of *mots sous les mots* are inserted into the text itself. This is true in at least 5 cases out of 14, and in two of these (no. 8 and 12) some non-verbal emphatic devices are added to the verbal ones. The exhortation to catch the "vertical" message of the text is expressed by verbs referring to an heuristic and cognitive activity, sometimes in the form of an imperative, e.g.:

no. 5.12 ἐκ δὲ ἀκροστιχίδος γνώθι τὸ σῆμα τίνας.

Sometimes in a future tense:

35 Despite the mysterious Ἀριστοδήμου ε' printed by Kalinka in his apparatus – perhaps meant as Ἀριστοδήμου ἐ(στί)?

36 In no. 6 only the letters of the second word of the vertical message, χαῖρε, which is a mesostic, are bigger than the other letters, and this is clearly intended to make the mesostic more visible.

37 Although none of the inscriptions examined bears any trace of paint, one can suppose that some acrostics might be marked with colour (see Luz 2010: 34 n. 109).

38 The only exception is text no. 13: according to Sherard's copy, lines do not correspond to verses; however, since the stone is lost, nothing sure can be said about the layout of the inscription.

no. 6.7–8 νοῦτερον δέ, ξεῖ[ν]ε, καὶ οὖνομα πρόσθ[ε χαραχθέν] | ἴσθι καὶ εὐρήσεις ἐντὸς ἀκροστιχίδ[ος]

no. 12.11–12 σῆμα δὲ σοί, Νικώ, κτίστου δ' ὅ[ν]ομ' εὐθὺ μαθήσῃ | [ἐξ ἀκροστιχί]δος λαϊνέας. | [πάραγε].

Sometimes in a participle:

no. 8.36 [εἴκοσι] καὶ δυσὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος

no. 13.10 [στὰς φύλ]ε ὁδ(ο)ιόρε πᾶς, τοῦνομα διζόμενος.

The term which recurs at least twice (maybe three times) for naming the acrostic is ἀκροστιχίς.<sup>39</sup>

Besides calling the reader's attention to the presence of an acrostic, the references inside the text usually function as an exegetic support for a correct understanding of the acrostic, mostly when this is a mere name: we are told that the acrostic contains the deceased's name (no. 5, 6, 13), that it refers to the κτίστης of the monument (no. 12), or to the author of the verses (no. 8). Moreover, if Peek's supplement is correct,<sup>40</sup> in text no. 6 the acrostic name is also paraphrased in the text (line 9 δὴ γάρ μοι γενεὴ μὲν ἄφ' αἵματος οὐρανίωνων], and Ἀπολλωνίδης means exactly "son of Apollo"), so that the acrostic appears as the solution of a sort of "riddle" placed inside the text.

As for the *relationship* between the acrostics and their poems, how do they contribute to the message as a whole? The acrostic message always adds something to the verse message: in most texts examined the acrostic adds what is not said in the verses; nonetheless, even when part of the information given by the acrostic is also transmitted by the verses (no. 4: the name of Sophytos and that of Naratos' descendants are mentioned also at line 4), the acrostic does not fail to add something to this (in text no. 4 the acrostic makes clear Sophytos' role in realizing the monument). Particularly interesting is the double pun of text no. 7: if the acrostic gives one part of the name of the author, an isopsephic riddle hints at another part of the name, so that the two puns – acrostic and riddle – are integrated with one another.

Obviously, the acrostic may affect *diction*. In text no. 1, for example, the acrostic clearly affects the choice of words at the beginning of line 2, where the non-Ionic form ἀελίου appears significantly isolated within an epigram marked by a prominent Ionic and epic colour (see line 2 γλυκερήν, ἐσχατήν, 3 ῥηνεῖς, 4 σκοτίν, 7 <σ>τυγερῆς, ἀδελφεοῦ, εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο, 8 νοῦσος). In addition, the choice of the very first word of the line produces

<sup>39</sup> See n. 2 above.

<sup>40</sup> Luz (2010: 43 n. 132) points out that the emphatic δὴ γάρ at the beginning of line 9 suggests that the final word of the verse might refer to the acrostic mentioned in the previous line.

an unusual order of the subjects (see, in particular, the sequence of lines 7 and 8, with an exclamation immediately followed by a short description of the cause of the death, unusually relegated to the end of the poem). Awkward solutions, however, are not necessarily due to the acrostic; see for example the odd line 6.<sup>41</sup>

Even when the author emerges as a learned poet (no. 4), who refines his language and style within the tradition of Greek poetry, and can enjoy an affected syntax and a vocabulary full of rare terms and poetic reminiscences, the acrostic affects composition and word order: see e.g. line 17, where ἔς τ' αἶαν would be far more plain and fluent than αἶαν τ' ἔς, which is nonetheless metrically equivalent.

Even text no. 5, although ambitious in its choice of words, betrays some forced expressions at the beginning of the lines: *iuncturae* like ῥηϊδίου βιότου (line 2), ἔχνος βιοτήσιον (line 3), δῶρα βίου (line 7) have a merely decorative function, as well as the use of “our” instead of the more natural “my” at the beginning of line 8. As Luz (2010: 35 n. 110) pointed out, the *iunctura* οἶκον ἐλευθερίας at the beginning of line 10 sounds in stark contrast to the gloomy and negative idea of death expressed by the rest of the poem: such an expression, which assures the verse of an initial ο, seems to act as a mere filler. Also at the beginning of line 11, according to the accepted reading of the verse, the pronoun ὑμεῖν appears to be merely expletive, aimed at assuring an initial υ.

Some more examples of forced choice of dialect, and forced diction and vocabulary can easily be found in text no. 6: one can notice λωῖτερος (line 4) and νοῖτερον (7), epicisms more or less awkwardly inserted into the text because of their initial letters.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, at the very beginning of the poem the Doric article ᾶ (ᾶ κύρβις) is apparently due to the necessity of an initial α.<sup>43</sup>

The pun is double – therefore the result is even more forced – in no. 3 and 9. In text no. 3 a syllabic acrostic and an acrostic-telestic are combined: with a witty remark at line 10 (“ρος” κατάλοιπον ἔχω) the author himself admits that it is not easy to find a word beginning with the syllable required by the acrostic. In text no. 9 not only do the initial letters of the lines compose the acrostic, but in addition the number of the letters of each verse corresponds to the number of days of each month of the year, and the

41 Note that the imperative of the verb “to know” at the beginning of the verse is the most common choice in the acrostics when an iota is needed (cf. no. 6.8; 10.3; 12.10).

42 In the same epigram νοῖτερον is paralleled only by εἰς ἡμᾶς (line 2), therefore might be regarded as a “poetic plural” (see Luz 2010: 42 n. 131).

43 The Doric form ποτί, which follows immediately, might be due to the influence of ᾶ κύρβις.

poem is 12 lines long. Such a complex mechanism requires the forced insertion of a letter at line 6 (ἀριθμησας) and the deletion of a letter at line 5 (παρησιαν), whereas the acrostic brings a rare term at the beginning of line 11 (ῥέμβην), and produces a sometimes obscure syntax (lines 10–11).

One must note also some examples of phonetic *orthography* due to the acrostic: e.g. line 10 of no. 10, and perhaps also lines 15 and 22, begin with an ῆ that, following the pronunciation then current in Graeco-Roman Egypt, is equivalent to εἰ, and such a “phonetic” writing seems to be intentional in the light of the εἰ used at line 1.

Finally, *enjambement* too can help to compose the acrostic, forcing a word to begin a new line: see no. 13.5 [ἀ]φθάρτοις.

## 6. What Is an Inscribed Acrostic for?

We now need to investigate the function of the acrostics. What requirements do they serve in the inscriptions examined? Before trying to find an answer to this question, a few preliminary remarks should be made.

The provenance of the inscriptions examined highlights two areas as particularly prominent: Asia Minor and Egypt, with a special concentration of religious texts in the latter country. The form of the acrostic has a local tradition particularly old and deep-rooted in these areas: the oldest examples of acrostic come from third millennium BC Mesopotamia (especially the Sumeric world), and the oldest examples of acrostic attested in Egypt are not much more recent, dating back to the second millennium BC (see e.g. Guarducci 1978: 1736–1737; see also Bernand, *I Philae ad* 143). Neither is ancient Jewish literature unrelated to the phenomenon: on the contrary, it was from the Semitic world that the form of the acrostic was apparently transmitted to the Greek world (Guarducci 1978: 1738). As for the small corpus considered, it will not be by chance that no example comes from mainland Greece, that the examples come equally from Egypt and Asia Minor, that an inscription comes also from Palestine, and that the only example from the Greek islands is the monument of a dead person with a Syrian-Palestinian name (no. 1). In this perspective, the acrostic appears as the result of an interesting mixing of some local pre-Hellenic traditions and the Greek poetic and epigraphic tradition.

In particular, the local non-Greek traditions give their own contribution to the phenomenon: the magic/religious or mystic power attributed to the letters of the alphabet within oriental and Egyptian culture explains the use of acrostics in religious contexts in Egypt;<sup>44</sup> at the same time, in the rela-

44 See Dornseiff 1925.

tionship with gods the acrostic functions as a seal of the identity of the dedicator, which is very important within a religion based on some sort of “exchange relationship” between deities and humans.

Funerary acrostics offer another excellent example of a Greek application of a non-Greek tradition: the main purpose of the funerary monument is to perpetuate the deceased’s memory and his/her name, and making this name resound for all time is a guarantee of immortality for the dead; this is why so many epitaphs ask the passerby to greet the deceased and read his/her name. If this name is inserted into the texture of the poem, it will be seen any time the poem is read, and it will be read again and again in search of that name.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, an acrostic poem cannot be reused or plagiarized, since the acrostic functions as a strong connexion between that text and only one name, which cannot be replaced by any other name without modifying the whole text.

## 7. Some Concluding Remarks

Acrostics found in inscriptions are messages designed for reading: an acrostic implies a reading which is not merely “linear” but multidirectional, and embraces the text as a whole.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the text is regarded as a multifaceted object, and has to be examined in all parts in order to detect all its messages. Such an approach implies a well-rooted habit of reading a written text. As regards inscriptions, this is true in more than one respect: inscriptions are the oldest examples of written messages within Greek culture; and the chronology of acrostic verse inscriptions – from the Hellenistic age onwards – itself implies a new prominence of written culture.

Nonetheless, as Luz (2010: 46) has correctly observed, what we have called verbal emphatic devices function as an interruption of the narrative concerning either the dead person or the worshipper, calling the reader’s – or better, the listener’s – attention to the poem as a physical object with a visible shape. This means obviously that an approach to the inscription as a written text could not be completely taken for granted even during the imperial period.<sup>47</sup> If so, one cannot perhaps exclude that – if we assume

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45 On death, memory and immortality, the literature is very rich: one can mention some classic books such as Simondon 1982 and Svenbro 1988; more recently, Sourvinou-Inwood 1995 and Le Bris 2001.

46 See also Luz 2010: 3.

47 Agosti (2010) has persuasively shown that oral performance – reading – was the usual way of enjoying inscribed texts for a very long time. See also Day 2010.

that at least some inscriptions were read aloud by official readers – the acrostic could help the listeners to find on the stone what was orally recited and described,<sup>48</sup> or better, to complete – together with the reader – the message expressed by the verses.

The features observed in the acrostics examined (layout, verbal and non-verbal emphatic devices, forced diction) imply a clear project, which intends to give the greatest importance to the acrostic, even if this means neglecting the poetic quality of the text. Poetic and aesthetic interest is therefore secondary to the interest in the acrostic, which has nothing to do with aesthetic taste.

Since in some cases the proper name spelled out by the acrostic could hardly fit well in a dactylic verse, it is reasonable to infer that the acrostic functions as an alternative way of inserting the name into the text although *extra metrum*: see no. 1, 5, 6. Nonetheless, this explanation is applicable only in a few cases.

A specific interest in word-play for its own sake cannot be denied, at least in the inscriptions where an acrostic is combined with some similar phenomena (no. 3, 6, 7, 9, 11). It is precisely during the Hellenistic period that the taste for brilliant and creative (sometimes bizarre) ideas, and for stratified messages, is much more widespread than before. The acrostic fits in well with such a cultural and intellectual context. As Mairs (2011 and in this volume) has well explained, at least in some cases such a marked attempt to claim “credit for their skill and sophistication” on the authors’ part, such emphasis on their learning and erudition, and intellectual and cultural refinement, may be due to some cultural insecurity and to “a desire to express an attachment to Greek or Latin culture at the boundaries of empire”.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, the inscribed acrostics collected and examined cannot be reduced to a mere game, with the sole purpose of showing off the author’s cleverness and command of Greek language and culture: their contents do not overlap with those expressed in the text of the poem, but rather add something new and different from what the text says. In other words, the acrostics carry a message themselves, and therefore have a practical, in-

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48 See Susini 1988: 112: “la ripetizione memorizzante è aiutata spesso dalla lettura pubblica: davanti alla tomba insignita di un carne, un pubblico lettore, che era al tempo stesso retore ed esegeta, ripeteva notizie destinate ad appagare l’ascoltatore. Meglio se la metrica, nella poesia di paese, aiutava la recitazione, e se gli acrostici favorivano riscontri tra quanto veniva recitato e quanto si compitava sulla pietra”.

49 Mairs (2011: 296) thinks of “Roman military and civilian administrative personnel who will have had a reasonable degree of literate education, and perhaps have been driven in particular to reflect on their position at the boundaries of empire” as authors of these texts.

formative function. In particular, the inscribed acrostics give the information which is significant in social life: they reveal the name of the dedicator, client, dead person, and sometimes also poet.

The inscriptions examined seem to pay a special attention to the layout of the text in order to give a special emphasis to the acrostic: such emphasis must correspond, first of all, to the intention of securing the reader's attention and making that inscription stand out among many other stones.<sup>50</sup> But emphasis is also given to the contents of the acrostic, not only to the acrostic itself as a rare and bizarre feature of the inscribed stone: at first sight, the reader could immediately learn who were the members of his/her own community involved in the monument. In this respect, the acrostics could have served as a sort of "summary banner" – at least in most cases clearly visible and selective – of the whole poem.

In particular, the provenance of the acrostic poems examined from areas where Greek was not the only (or first) language might also suggest that the acrostics could have functioned as a socially-oriented abstract of the whole inscribed text, especially for readers who were not native or good speakers of the Greek language. These readers (or listeners) could perhaps be satisfied with catching the short message of the acrostic: within a geographic and chronological context where Greek is not the official language, the acrostic had to give all people an excerpt of the most important information about the monument.

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50 On the strategies employed by inscribed epigrams to attract their potential readers, see Baumbach – Petrovic – Petrovic 2010: 11.



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*Sopha grammata:*  
Acrostichs in Greek and Latin Inscriptions  
from Arachosia, Nubia and Libya<sup>\*</sup>

Rachel Mairs

Τὴν χάραξι φρόντισε τεχνικὰ νὰ γίνῃ.  
Ἐκφρασις σοβαρὴ καὶ μεγαλοπρεπής.  
Τὸ διάδημα καλλίτερα μᾶλλον στενό·  
ἐκεῖνα τὰ φαρδιὰ τῶν Πάρθων δὲν μὲ ἀρέσουν.  
Ἡ ἐπιγραφή, ὡς σύνηθες, ἑλληνικά· 5  
ὅχ' ὑπερβολικὴ, ὅχι πομπώδης –  
μὴν τὰ παρεξηγήσει ὁ ἀνθύπατος  
ποὺ ὅλο σκαλίζει καὶ μηνᾶ στὴν Ρώμη –  
ἀλλ' ὅμως βέβαια τιμητικὴ.  
Κάτι πολὺ ἐκλεκτὸ ἀπ' τὸ ἄλλο μέρος· 10  
κανένας δισκοβόλος ἔφηβος ὥραϊος.  
Πρὸ πάντων σὲ συστήνω νὰ κυτιάξεις  
(Σιθάσπη, πρὸς θεοῦ, νὰ μὴ λησμονηθεῖ)  
μετὰ τὸ Βασιλεὺς καὶ τὸ Σωτήρ,  
νὰ χαραχθεῖ μὲ γράμματα κομψά, Φιλέλλην. 15  
Καὶ τώρα μὴ μὲ ἀρχίζεις εὐφυσολογίες,  
τὰ «Ποῦ οἱ Ἑλληνες;» καὶ «Ποῦ τὰ Ἑλληνικά  
πίσω ἀπ' τὸν Ζάγρο ἐδῶ, ἀπὸ τὰ Φράατα πέρα».  
Τόσοι καὶ τόσοι βαρβαρότεροί μας ἄλλοι  
ἀφοῦ τὸ γράφουν, θὰ τὸ γράψουμε κ' ἐμεῖς. 20  
Καὶ τέλος μὴ ξεχνᾷς ποὺ ἐνίοτε  
μᾶς ἔρχοντ' ἀπὸ τὴν Συρία σοφισταί,  
καὶ στιχοπλόκοι, κι ἄλλοι ματαιόσπουδοι.  
Ὡστε ἀνελλήνιστοι δὲν εἴμεθα, θαρρῶ.

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\* I would like to thank the conference organisers and participants for some very thought-provoking discussions, and Arietta Papaconstantinou (Oxford) for putting me straight on the precise implications of ἀνελλήνιστοι. I use the etymological spelling “acrostich”, although both “acrostich” and “acrostic” are acceptable English forms.

See to it the engraving be skilfully done.  
 The expression serious and dignified.  
 The diadem preferably rather narrow;  
 Those broad Parthian ones are not to my liking.  
 The inscription, as usual in Greek; 5  
 nothing excessive, nothing pompous –  
 lest the proconsul, who always pokes around  
 and reports to Rome, take it the wrong way –  
 but nonetheless, of course, honorific.  
 Something very special on the other side; 10  
 some discus-thrower, young, good-looking.  
 Above all, I bid you pay attention  
 (Sithaspis, for God's sake don't let them forget)  
 that after "King" and "Saviour"  
 be engraved in elegant lettering: "Philhellene". 15  
 And now don't start your witticisms on me,  
 like: "where are the Greeks?" and "where is Greek used  
 around here, this side of Zagros, out beyond Phraata?"  
 Since so many others more barbarous than ourselves  
 write it, we will write it too. 20  
 And besides, do not forget that on occasion  
 sophists do come to us from Syria,  
 and versifiers and other pretentious pedants.  
 So we are not, I think, un-Greek.

Constantine P. Cavafy, *Philhellene* (1912)<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Philhellenes

There is a curious pattern in the distribution of Greek and Latin acrostich verse inscriptions: an especial concentration in frontier regions of the Graeco-Roman world, on the southern marches of Roman North Africa (Lower Nubia and the Libyan *limes*) and in Arachosia, in the Hellenistic Far East.<sup>2</sup> The authors of these verses take pains to align themselves with forms of Greek or Roman high culture and political authority, and some make very self-conscious references to Greek or Roman letters and education. Although their success in this varies – two of the poems discussed here are barely competent Latin, never mind competent verse – all the figures who claim authorship or ownership of these inscriptions in their acrostichs aspire to demonstrate their literary talents and skill at word-play.

There are several possible explanations for the concentration of acrostich verse inscriptions at the furthest limits of the Roman Empire and

1 Tr. after Keeley and Sherrard 1992 and Sachperoglou 2007.

2 See Garulli in this volume.

Hellenistic states. To a certain extent, the acrostich inscription is a phenomenon associated with the Roman army. It is easy to see, on a practical level, how the movement of legions around various trouble spots could create a distribution of this sort. Provoked by a fairly recently-published Greek inscription from outside the Roman Empire (geographically and chronologically), however, I intend here to consider another possible explanation: that geographical marginality and cultural and ethnic interaction provoke a desire to clarify one's status and assert one's cultural affinities. The ethnic backgrounds of most of the individuals considered here have been questioned by scholars, on the grounds of their names, command of Latin or Greek, or specific statements in their verses. The suggestion in some cases has been that they are trying to be something which they are not: to give the appearance of an educated, cultivated Greek or Roman, when they are "really" Indian, Libyan, Nubian, Egyptian or whatever else. This kind of essentialist approach to ethnicity is neither realistic nor productive, and runs counter to most modern studies of the topic which emphasise specifically the constructed, situational nature of ethnic identities.<sup>3</sup> The ways in which individuals attempt to assert group belonging are interesting and socially meaningful in themselves, whatever the "objective" criteria of ethnicity (language, descent, religious practice, physiognomy) an outside observer might perceive.

The inscriptions discussed here use a number of techniques in common. They use literary devices and word-play to demonstrate their education, social position and connection to the literary culture of the Greek or Roman world. The acrostichs (and also, in one of the inscriptions from Lower Nubia, an isopsephic puzzle) are signposted, whether by direct or indirect references in the text of the inscription itself, or by graphic techniques such as letter alignment, or repetition of the acrostich in a separate column. In addition to showing off their talent for word-play, they use certain literary devices: obscure vocabulary, Homeric or Vergilian allusions, statements about their education, and references to Apollo and the Muses. Contrasting this with the authors' position at the margins of the Graeco-Roman world, and the various signals about their ethnic and linguistic communities of origin, might we read the use of such literary techniques as cultural insecurity? Are the authors of these verses aware of their

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3 The literature on ethnic identity is copious. The model of ethnicity as a "constructed identity" is grounded in the work of Barth (1969). Jones (1998) discusses the history of ethnicity in archaeological thought, while Smith (2003) offers an archaeological case study where an ethnic model provides a compellingly constructive approach to the evidence. Ethnicity is one of the "big topics" in studies of Hellenistic Egypt, and treatments of the subject have been informed by the sociological literature: Goudriaan 1988; Bilde et al. 1992.

claimed identities being confronted with the judgements of outsiders who would challenge these claims?

The “Far East” of the Hellenistic world has not yielded many Greek inscriptions, so a new find, even if it comes from the antiquities market, is something of an event.<sup>4</sup> The inscription of Sophytos, first published in 2004,<sup>5</sup> is unprovenanced, but reports indicate that it came from Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, ancient Arachosia.<sup>6</sup> This provenance is supported by the material and workmanship of the stone on which it was cut. Kandahar was an “Alexandria”, in the common eastern sense of an existing city which received a Greek settlement under Alexander. Its political history over the following centuries was complex: it passed, by treaty, from Seleucid to Mauryan control, then in the early second century BC was caught up in the southwards expansion of the Greek kingdom of Bactria. Sophytos’ inscription may be dated only very broadly to the second century BC, but it therefore seems most probable that it was made at a period when Kandahar had been “reconquered” by Bactrian Greeks.

Although there has not been much subsequent discussion of this inscription, attention has focussed on two points: Sophytos’ name, and the literary sophistication of the text, an acrostich poem. Despite its superficial resemblance to a Greek name beginning in Σοφ- or Σωφ- the name Sophytos (Σώφυτος) is not Greek, nor is that of his father. This non-Greek name may lead us to reflect in particular ways on the poem’s masterly (some might say excessive) display of Greek erudition. In this, the acrostich is part of a wider and more complex stylistic programme of sophisticated literary allusion and word-play, all, apparently, directed at giving the reader a certain impression of Sophytos, his education and his cultural identity.

Similar literary techniques and strategies of self-representation to those employed by Sophytos are found in the other acrostich verse inscriptions discussed in this paper, from the temples of Kalabsha and Philae in Lower

4 On the archaeology of the Hellenistic Far East, see Mairs 2011b.

5 *Editio princeps*, French translation and commentary: Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004; text and English translations given in section 2 below. See also the preliminary notes in Bernard and Rougemont 2003a and Bernard and Rougemont 2003b, and Rougemont 2005. The inscription is discussed by Hollis (2011). See also Garulli in this volume.

6 Hellenistic Arachosia: Bernard 2005; Mairs 2011c. Greek inscriptions from Kandahar: Canali De Rossi 2004, *IEOG* nos 290–293. Canali de Rossi’s compendium is comprehensive for the Hellenistic Far East in general, except for the two subsequently-discovered inscriptions published in Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004.



Nubia,<sup>7</sup> and the military outpost of Bu Njem in Libya. These, although Roman in date and provenance, offer points of cultural as well as literary comparison for the inscription of Sophytos. In particular, a man named Paccius Maximus who dedicated two acrostich inscriptions at Kalabsha has often been viewed as a non-Greek who makes an overt, but inelegant, protestation of his Greek education and cultural affinities. His inscriptions come from a region of the ancient world as culturally- and ethnically-complex as Hellenistic Arachosia, a complexity which seems to have provoked in its literate inhabitants a similar desire to control the presentation of their identity and, perhaps, a similar insecurity in these identities. The authors of the acrostich inscriptions from Lower Nubia know that they are clever – just as Sophytos, who repeats his acrostich in a separate column to the left of his epitaph, knows that he is clever and wants others to know it. Maximus and Sophytos both also make a very explicit play on Greek high culture at a cultural and political boundary, an entirely expected place for cultural, and perhaps ethnic, boundaries to be actively patrolled. There is no direct connection between these regions (Arachosia and Nubia), but it is not, I would argue, a coincidence that we find similar forms of cultural expression and levels of ethnic ambiguity in such interaction-zones at the edges of the Hellenistic or Roman Empires.<sup>8</sup>

These are areas where the very notion of what it is to be Greek is unstable, areas where in-group and out-group ascriptions of identity may differ from one another, and where locals may be very sensitive to the judgements or cultural snobbery of outsiders. Neither Kandahar nor Kalabsha, despite their marginality to the Graeco-Roman world (and to classical scholarship), were backwaters. They experienced a considerable through-traffic of armies, pilgrims and traders, with all the potential this implies for confrontation between cultures and values. Sophytos' epitaph and Paccius Maximus' hymns offered their authors an opportunity to control the presentation of their identities. The use of sophisticated Greek verse and acrostichs is, I would argue, an important part of this process of claiming and defending a particular identity, one in which Greek high culture was important. Cavafy, had he known of them, would have had interesting things to say about these inscriptions.<sup>9</sup>

At no point does the unnamed king of Cavafy's *Philhellene* explicitly claim a Greek identity, and nor do the authors of any of the acrostich inscriptions considered here apply an ethnic descriptor to themselves. His

7 Mairs 2011a; see also Burstein 1998; Burstein 1999–2000;

8 A direct comparison between these two “resource frontiers” in the Hellenistic period is made by Burstein (1993) and Holt (1993).

9 On Cavafy's life and works, see Liddell 1974.

relationship to the Greek language and Greek culture is nevertheless extremely important to him. He is keenly aware of outside scrutiny, of his Greekness or otherwise being judged. He is under Roman surveillance, and his choice of language and imagery on his coinage will be read as political statements. He knows that his cultural pretensions may be made fun of by his own people. He is also aware that judging “civilisation” is a comparative exercise. He may not be all that Greek, but there are others nearby who are still less Greek – βαρβαρότεροι, “more barbarian” – than him. He prides himself, however, in having something of the necessary *savoir faire* to interact with Greek scholars and operate in a Greek cultural sphere.

All or most of the authors of the acrostich verse inscriptions discussed here are, I would suggest, engaged in a similar exercise. As well as their choice to demonstrate that they are skilled users of literary Greek, and the techniques they use to do this, I am also interested in the modern reader’s reception of such claims to Greek high culture. The authors of these inscriptions have often been portrayed as culturally insecure, defensive about their (false) claim to Greek identity. There is, however, nothing more Greek than literary pretension (as Cavafy’s eastern king hints in line 23), the very thing of which the authors of these inscriptions – and other acrostich verse – have often been accused. Perhaps more seriously, Paccius Maximus has also been accused of being an inexperienced user of the Greek language, but – again using a comparative index of civilisation – there is not much in inscriptions and papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt that is better, and plenty that is worse.<sup>10</sup> The poets from Bu Njem, on the other hand, are far from being expert users of literary Latin, or even of the Latin language.

The presence and instrumental use of Greek and Latin high literary culture at notional “frontiers” of the Graeco-Roman world does not, however, have to be read as defensive. In what follows, I would like to shift the emphasis towards regarding a few of these inscriptions (notably those of Sophytos and Paccius Maximus) as *successful* exercises in demonstrating their authors’ literary accomplishments and ability to operate at a high level in a Greek cultural sphere. I would also like to de-emphasise the potential ethnic component to any such self-presentation. Nothing in the inscriptions discussed here amounts to an outright claim to “be Greek”, and whether either of the two men thought of themselves, or were thought of by others, in this way we can never really know. What we do know was that Greek literature and literacy were important to them and that it was important to them to make a show of their erudition. A good Greek educa-

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10 Mairs 2011a: 286–287; cf. on “bad Greek” Fewster 2002: 233, and Mairs Forthcoming.

tion and the ability to engage in sophisticated word-play are, I would further argue, part of a wider claim to belonging to a particular elite cultural milieu, one which is associated with a high social status and with a wider community beyond one's own locality.

In choosing to use the acrostich form for their verses, Sophytos, Pacius Maximus and the others considered here have in fact chosen an excellent way to stake such a claim.<sup>11</sup> The author, already working within the constraints of metre and conventions of poetic expression, incorporates an additional level of structural complexity. Furthermore, the acrostich is a very self-conscious literary form. The words "concealed" in the acrostich very often represent a signature, with which the named person claims credit for his skill and sophistication. The acrostich may also be presented in such a way as to be visually striking. Acrostich inscriptions were made to be seen, and from the style, content and form of the final product we can infer something of the author's expectations of his audience, and even his expectations of their critical reaction. Starting with the inscription of Sophytos, I will briefly introduce and contextualise the seven acrostich verses under discussion, from Kandahar, the sites of Lower Nubia and Bu Njem, reserving full discussion of their authorship, and their common strategies of self-representation and signposting techniques for the conclusion.

## 2. Kandahar: ΔΙΑ ΣΩΦΥΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΠΑΤΟΥ<sup>12</sup>

### Σωφύτου στήλη

|   |                                              |    |
|---|----------------------------------------------|----|
| Δ | δηρὸν ἐμῶγ κοκυῶν ἐριθηλέα δώματ' ἐόντα      |    |
| Ι | ἴς ἄμαχος Μοιρῶν ἐξόλεσεν τριάδος·           |    |
| Α | αὐτὰρ ἐγώ, τυννὸς κοιμίδῃ βιότοιό τε πατρῶν  |    |
| С | Сώφυτος εὖνις ἐὼν οἰκτρὰ Ναρατιάδης,         |    |
| Ω | ὥς ἀρετὴν Ἑκάτου Μουσέων τ' ἥσχηκα σὺν ἐσθλῇ | 5  |
| Φ | φυρτὴν σωφροσύνη, θῆμος ἐπεφρασάμην          |    |
| Υ | ὕψωσαιμὶ κε πῶς μέγαρον πατρώϊον αὐθις·      |    |
| Τ | τεκνοφόρον δὲ λαβὼν ἄλλοθεν ἀργύριον,        |    |
| Ο | οἴκοθεν ἐξέμολον μεμαῶς οὐ πρόσθ' ἐπανελθεῖν |    |
| Υ | ὑψιστον κτᾶσθαι πρίμ μ' ἀγαθῶν ἄφενος·       | 10 |
| Τ | τοῦνεκ' ἐπ' ἐμπορίησιν ἰὼν εἰς ἄστεα πολλὰ   |    |
| Ο | ὄλβον ἀλωβήτως εὐρὺν ἐληϊσάμην.              |    |
| Υ | ὕμνητὸς δὲ πέλων πάτριον ἐτέεσσιν ἐσίγμαι    |    |
| Ν | νηρίοις θερπνός τ' εὐμενέταις ἐφάνην·        |    |
| Α | ἀμφοτέρους δ' οἶκόν τε σεσηπότα πάτριον εἶθα | 15 |

11 On Greek and Latin acrostichs, see in general Courtney 1990.

12 Text as Garulli in this volume except for lines 5–6, on which see Garulli's apparatus. Tr. Nagle and Burstein 2006: 285.

**P** ῥέξας ἐκ καινῆς κρέσσονα συντέλεσα  
**A** αἰάν τ' ἔς τύμβου πεπτωκότος ἄλλον ἔτευξα,  
**T** τὴν καὶ ζῶν στήλην ἐν ὁδῷ ἐπέθηκα λάλλον.  
**O** οὕτως οὖν ζηλωτὰ τάδ' ἔργματα συντέλεσαντος  
**Y** υἱέες υἰωνοὶ τ' οἶκον ἔχοιεν ἐμοῦ.

20

#### Stele of Sophytos

The house of my ancestors had flourished for a long time, when the irresistible strength of the three Fates destroyed it. But I, Sophytos son of Naratos, while still a child, was deprived of the wealth of my ancestors. I cultivated the excellence of the Archer [Apollo] and the Muses together with noble wisdom. Then I devised a plan to restore my ancestral house. Gathering from various places fruitful money, I left home, intending not to return before I had acquired great wealth. For this reason I went to many cities as a merchant and blamelessly gained great wealth. Full of praise, I returned to my fatherland after countless years and became a source of joy to my friends. At once my ancestral house which had decayed I restored to an even greater state. I also prepared a new tomb to replace the one that had fallen into ruin, and I placed a stele that would speak of my life by the roadside. The deeds I have done are worthy of emulation. May my sons and grandsons preserve my house.

The inscription of Sophytos, as already noted, emerged from the antiquities market. It is said to have come from the city of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, but even this provenance does little to help us contextualise it. Excavations at Kandahar, probably ancient Alexandria in Arachosia, were curtailed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and have revealed little of the Hellenistic-period city.<sup>13</sup> So the internal evidence of the inscription is all the information we really have on Sophytos and his milieu.

Sophytos' inscription fits within the tradition of Greek funerary epigrams, displayed with an implicit or explicit appeal to the passer-by to stop, read the inscription and think about the accomplishments or misfortunes of the person commemorated.<sup>14</sup> The *proskynemata* of Paccius Maximus and others on the temples of Lower Nubia (which I will discuss in the following section) sometimes offer the reader an additional reward – that they, too, will benefit from the author's prayer to the god – but Sophytos' references to Greek gods are as patrons of the arts, and the achievements of Sophytos and his family are the major theme. He claims credit for his inscription with the acrostich διὰ Σωφύτου τοῦ Ναράτου, an acrostich which is, significantly, repeated in a separate column.

The names of Sophytos and his father Naratos<sup>15</sup> are not Greek. Pinault makes a strong case for them being Indian, from original forms Subhūti

13 McNicoll and Ball 1996; Helms 1997.

14 Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004: 237.

15 Or Narates: the name appears only as the patronymic Naratiades.

and Nārada, both well-attested Indian names.<sup>16</sup> Although Naratos is not otherwise known in this Greek form, the name Sophytos or Sophytes appears on a series of Greek coins of various denominations from the Hellenistic Far East, from some time around the turn of the fourth–third century BC,<sup>17</sup> something which, unfortunately, tells us little about our Sophytos of second-century Kandahar. In his inscription, Sophytos is clearly appealing to an audience which identifies itself strongly with Greek culture. Although he never calls himself a Greek – or anything else – his inscription is linguistically and culturally monolingual.

Sophytos – if he is the author of his verse – is extremely well-educated, and not just “well-educated for an Arachosian”. (Questions of authorship will be discussed further below.) He makes explicit reference to his education and early exposure to Greek culture, in his cultivation of the virtue (*arete*) of Apollo and the Muses, even after being deprived while still young of his family’s wealth and reputation (lines 5–6). It is a combination of this culture and sense of family honour – along with hard cash – which enables him to establish himself and provide for his children and grandchildren later in life.

It is clear that Sophytos is using the Greek language to express his claims to high status, filial piety and intellectual and cultural refinement, but what significance, in this context, did his use of Greek, and more specifically techniques of Greek word-play, have? Was there an alternative language or cultural convention within which he could have chosen to make these statements? There is evidence of the use of Aramaic and Prākṛit at Kandahar some time before Sophytos’ inscription, in the Aśokan Edicts of the mid-third century BC, but this is not sufficient to give us a detailed picture of the domains within which each language was used. On the Stele of Sophytos, it is interesting to note how notions of high socio-economic status, Greek culture and perhaps even Greek burial go together, but whether Sophytos’ acquisition and projection of a Greek education made him Greek – or whether he ever considered that it did – remains a matter for debate.

I keep my introductory discussion of the following inscriptions – from Lower Nubia and from Libya – relatively concise, highlighting points of literary style and technique which I will return to in the conclusion in the context of comparison with the Sophytos inscription.

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16 Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004: 249–259; see also Pinault 2005.

17 Bopearachchi 1996.

3. Kalabsha and Philae: ΜΑΞΙΜΟΣ ΔΕΚΟΥΡΙΩΝ ΕΓΡΑΨΑ /  
ΠΑΚΚΙΟΣ / IULII FAUSTINI M... /  
ΚΑΤΙΛΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΝΙΚΑΝΟΡΟΣ<sup>18</sup>

IMEG 168

μακάριον ὅτ' ἔβην ἡρεμίας τόπον ἑσαθρήσαι,  
ἀέρι τὸ ποθεῖνόν ψυχῆς πνεῦμ' ἐπανεῖναι,  
ξένα μοι βιοτῇ περὶ φρένα πάντοθεν ἔδονεῖτο,  
ἵστορα κακίης ἑμαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχων ἔλεγχον,  
μύστιν τότε κίκλησκε φύσις πόνον γεωργεῖν· 5  
ὁ σοφὸς τότε ἐγὼ ποικίλον ἥρμοζον αἰοιδῇ,  
σεμνὸν ἀπὸ θεῶν κωτίλον ἐπιτυχῶν νόημα.  
δῆλον ὅτε θεοῖς ἀρεστὸν ἠργάζετο Μοῦσα,  
Ἑλικῶν χλόης ἄνθεμον ἀπετίναξα κῶμον·  
καὶ τότε μέ τις ὕπνου μυχὸς ἠρέθισε φέρεσθαι, 10  
ὀλίγον ἐπίφοβον φαντασίης ὄναρ τραπήναι·  
ὕπνος δέ με λέ(ξ)ας ταχὺν ἀπεκόμισε φί[λ]ην γ[ῆ]ν·  
ρεῖθροις ἐδόκουν γὰρ ποταμοῦ σῶμα ἀπο[λο]ύειν,  
ἱκανοῖς ἀπὸ Νύλου γλυκεροῦ ὕδασι προσ[η]νῶς·  
φύσιν δὲ σεμνὴν Μουσῶν Καλλιέπειαν 15  
Νύμφαις ἅμα πάσαις μέσ(σ)ην κῶμον αἰδεῖν·  
Ἑλλάδος τι καὶ γὰρ βραχὺ λείψανον νομίζων,  
γραπτὸν ἀπὸ σοφῆς ἐπνευσα ψυχῆς μου νόημα·  
ῥάβδῳ δέ τις οἷα κατὰ μέλος δέμας δονηθεῖς,  
ἁρμογὴν μέλει συνεργὸν ἐπεκάλουν χαράττειν, 20  
ψόγον ἄλλοτρίοις ἤθεσιν ἀπολιπὼν ἀδῆλον.  
ἀρχὴ δέ μ' ἔκλῃζεν τὸ σοφὸν ποίημα λέξαι·  
λαμπρὸς τότε Μάνδουλις ἔβη μέγας ἀπ' Ὀλύμπου,  
θέλων βαρβαρικὴν λέξιν ἀπ' Αἰθιοπῶν,  
καὶ γλυκερὴν ἔσπευσεν ἐφ' Ἑλλάδα μοῦσαν αἰεῖσαι, 25  
λαμπρὰ παρῆα φέρων καὶ δεξιὸς Ἰσιδι βαίνων,  
Ῥωμαίων μεγέθει δόξαν ἀγαλλόμενος,  
μαντικὰ πυθίων ἄτε δὴ θεὸς Οὐλύμποιο·  
ὥς βίος ἀνθρώποις προορώμενος ἐξέθεν αὐχεῖ,  
ὥς ἡμαρ καὶ νύξ σε σέβει, ὦραι δ' ἅμα πᾶσαι, 30  
καὶ καλέουσί σε Βρεῖθ καὶ Μάνδουλιν συνομαίμους,  
ἄστρα θεῶν ἐπίσημα κατ' οὐρανὸν ἀντέλλοντα.  
καὶ τάδε σοι στείχοντα χαράσσειν μ' αὐτὸς ἔλεξας

18 Text of the Greek inscriptions as Garulli in this volume, except for lines 8–9 of IMEG 169 printed as in IMEG. The translation of IMEG 168 after Burstein 1997: 66–68. Text and translation of *CIL* 3.77 (= *CLE* 271) as in Courtney 1995: no. 26. The remaining translations are mine.

καὶ σοφὰ γράμματα πᾶσιν ἄθωπεύτως ἐσορᾶσθαι.

35

[εἴκοσι] καὶ δυσὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος.

When I had come to gaze on this blessed place of peace, and to let wander free in the air the inspiration desired by my soul, a way of life strange to me stirred my mind from all sides. As I could not convict myself of any evil, my nature urged me to cultivate mystic toil. In my wisdom I then composed a complex song, having received from the gods a holy and expressive idea. When it was clear that the Muse had accomplished something pleasing to the gods, I shook out my festival song, like the flower of a green shoot on Helicon. Then a cave enticed me to enter and sleep, although I was a little afraid to yield to a dream of fantasy. Sleep picked me up and swiftly bore me away to a dear land. I seemed to be gently washing my body in the flowing streams of a river with the bountiful waters of the sweet Nile. I imagined that Calliope, a holy member of the Muses, sang together with all the nymphs a sacred song. Thinking there still remained a bit of Greece, I set down in written form the idea which my wise soul had inspired in me. Just as one moving his body in time to music beaten by a staff, I summoned rhythm as a partner for the inscription of my song, leaving those of a critical bent little reason for blame. The leader urged me to speak my clever poem. Then great Mandulis, glorious, came down from Olympus. He charmed away the barbaric speech of the Aithiopians and urged me to sing in sweet Greek verse. He came with brilliant cheeks on the right hand of Isis, exulting in his greatness and the glory of the Romans, and uttering Pythian oracles like an Olympian god. You declared how because of you men can look forward to a livelihood, how day and night and all the seasons revere you and call you Breith and Mandulis, fraternal gods, stars who rise as a sign of the gods in heaven. And you yourself told me to inscribe these clever words, in order that they be viewed by all without flattery. [...] trusting in the first twenty-two letters.

### IMEG 169

πάντοτέ σε ὑμνήσω, Λατο[ῦ](ς) γόνε, Πύθι(ε) Ἄπολλον,  
ἄθανάτων προκαθάγεμα κα(ὶ) χρυσόχελ(υ) Παιάν.

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ σοῖς προθύροις ἦλθον· ἔ(π(ί)νευ(σ)ον,  
κύριε, τὰς προκο[π]ά[ς] μ' ἐν στρατιῇ μεγάλα[ς]·

ἰ(γ)άρ μοι δοίης· κα(γ)ὼ λ(οι)βαῖς ἀποδώσω

5

οἷα θεῶ μεγάλῳ καὶ Ἰσιδι τῇ βασιλίσσῃ.

σπείσω πάντοτ' ἐγὼ τοῖς δυσὶ τῶν προκοπῶν.

ἰ δεῖ (ἀνα)γνῶναι καὶ τοῦνομα τοῦ γράψαντος

δι(ς) τὰς διακοσίας ψή(φ)ισον ἕκ(σι) μίαν.

τὸ προσκύνημα τοῦ γράψαντος

10

καὶ τοῦ ἀναγνόντος σήμερον

παρὰ θεῶ Μάνδουλι.

At all times I celebrate you, son of Leto, Pythian Apollo,  
Guide of the immortals and Paeon of the golden lyre.

For I have come before your gates. Give me,

Lord, great successes in the army.

For if you give me them, I will give you libations, 5  
 Such as those due to a great god and to Isis the queen.  
 I will always make libations to both for these successes.  
 To find out the name of the one who wrote this,  
 Count two times two hundred and twenty-one.  
 Act of dedication for the one who wrote it 10  
 And for the one who recognises it today  
 For the god Mandulis.

### *CIL 3.77*

Invicti veneranda ducis per saecula vellent  
 Victrices Musae, Pallas, crinitus Apollo  
 Laeta serenifico defundere carmina cael[o],  
 Intemerata malas hominum set numina fr[u]d[es]  
 Iurgiaque arcanis et perfida pectora curis 5  
 Fugere. Hadriani tamen ad pia saecula verti  
 Ausa peroccultas remeant rimata latebras  
 Vt spirent cautes ac tempora prisca salute[nt];  
 Sacra Mamertino sonuerunt praeside sig[na].  
 Tum superum manifesta fides stetit: inclutu[s – [X] 10  
 Inachias sospes diti pede pressit harena[s].  
 Namque inter celsi densata sedilia tem[pli],  
 Incola quo plebes tectis effunditur at[que]  
 Munera caeli[colum ...]

The victorious Muses, Pallas and Apollo would have wished to pour down happy verses from a clear sky during the august era of the invincible emperor, but the undefiled deities fled from the wicked deceits of men and their quarrels and their hearts perfidious with secret preoccupations. Yet they dared to turn back at the conscientious era of Hadrian, and they return searching out hidden recesses so that stones may breathe and greet the [revived] olden days; the sacred statue gave voice while Mamertinus was prefect. The manifest proof of the reliability of the gods was established; the noble (< >), arrived safely, pressed with enriching foot the sands protected by Isis. For amid the thronged benches of the lofty temple, into which the neighbouring mob poured from its (crowded?) dwellings, the gifts of the gods...”

### *I Philae 143*

κάμῃ τὸν εὐτέχνου φωτὸς στίχον, ὃ φίλε, βῆμα  
 τίμιον ἀμπαύσας ἔγμαθε καὶ χάρισαι  
 λιταῖς ἱστορίαις λιτὸν πόνον, οἷα πέπαιγμαι,  
 οὐδὲ κενὰ μηνύων, οὐπὲρ ἔφυν γενέτον· 5  
 τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ πλώσας, φησί, ξένη, χεύματα Νεῖλου,  
 καιρὸν ἔχω φωνεῖν· χαίρετε πολλά, Φίλαι·



νικῶμαι πέτραις τε καὶ οὐρεσιν, ὃ καταράκται  
 καὶ ἔχω τεύχειν ἱστορικὴν σελίδα  
 νοστήσας, καὶ ἰδὼν Νικάνορα καὶ γένος ἄλλο  
 “ρος” κατάλοιπον ἔχω· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τέλος.

10

Stopping your worthy step, friend, examine me – the line of a skillful mortal – and grant simple stories the favour of a simple effort, so as to learn how I was playfully made, without revealing in vain who is my creator. “After sailing the streams of the fair Nile – he [sc. the poet] says – stranger, this is the time for me to cry: Many greetings, Philae! O cataracts, I yield to stones and to mountains. I too have to craft an historical piece, having returned after having seen Nikanor and his family”. I have a “-ros” left – for this is the end.

The Roman garrison town at Talmis (modern Kalabsha), 50 km south of the Nile’s first cataract, was the site of an important temple to the Nubian god Mandulis, equated in the temple’s Greek and Latin inscriptions with the Graeco-Roman Apollo. The temple attracted Roman official patronage, and many of those who left incised or painted dedicatory texts were Roman military personnel.<sup>19</sup> Pilgrims, too, made dedications to the gods of the temple. The majority of such inscriptions are Greek, of which some might be described as literary.<sup>20</sup> Three of these contain acrostich signatures, two Greek (*IMEG* 168 and 169) and one Latin (*CIL* 3.77). One of the Greek inscriptions (*IMEG* 169) contains a further word puzzle, where a cryptic instruction to “count two times two hundred, and twenty-one” gives the sum of the numerical values of the letters in the dedicator’s name. Another Roman left a double acrostich inscription in Greek downstream at Philae (*IPhilae* 143). As I have argued elsewhere, this concentration of four comparatively lengthy, complex and “literary” acrostich inscriptions at the southern frontier of the Roman Empire is of interest, not just from the perspective of dedicatory and epigraphic practice at Kalabsha and Philae, but also from a cultural and linguistic point of view.<sup>21</sup> They therefore offer an excellent point of comparison for Sophytos’ acrostich.

A Roman decurion named Paccius Maximus was the author of two of the Kalabsha acrostich inscriptions, of the first century AD (*IMEG* 168 and 169).<sup>22</sup> Like Sophytos, Maximus has tended to be perceived in modern

19 Gauthier 1911–1914; Curto et al. 1965; Nock 1934: 53–54; Frankfurter 1998: 108.

20 On the predominance of Greek at Kalabsha, and in dedications at other pilgrimage sites in Roman Egypt, as well as for a brief overview of epigraphic practice at Kalabsha, see Adams 2003: 580–583.

21 Mairs 2011a.

22 The reader is referred to Bernand 1969a for further bibliographical references, especially to early reports of the inscriptions. See also Garulli in this volume. The same Paccius Maximus left a third inscription at Kalabsha and another at the temple of Sarapis at Maharaqqa (*CIG* 5119), which allow us to flesh out further details of his life and career (see Wagner 1993; Burstein 1998; Burstein 1999–2000). He

scholarship as an ethnically-ambiguous figure, one whose supposed Nubian origins stand in contrast to his espousal of Greek culture and deference to Roman authority. In this context, his use of literary Greek and an acrostich might appear aspirational. The failure of his verse to entirely live up to these aspirations has been used as further argument of his non-Greek origins.

The historical and other grounds for Maximus being a Nubian are in fact not good. In *IMEG* 168 he writes that the god “charmed away the barbaric speech of the Aithiopians and urged me to sing in sweet Greek verse”, but he does not claim that this barbaric Aithiopian speech is his own, rather than simply that which he hears around him. As a member of a Roman legion stationed at Kalabsha, Maximus is also far more likely to be a recruit from another province of the Roman empire than a local Nubian.

Modern critics have tended to regard Maximus’ Greek as stilted and substandard, to varying degrees,<sup>23</sup> but the verse is at worst an attempt at a high literary style by a fluent user of Greek which does not quite live up to its own aspirations. Maximus is a perfectly competent user of the Greek language, and the poem does not offer any real evidence to argue that he was not a native speaker or fluent bilingual. It may be mannered and more than a little pretentious, but it is put together with considerable skill. Maximus cleverly accommodates his words to the double strictures of several different meters (also doubtless chosen to emphasise his gift for word play) and the acrostich form.<sup>24</sup> Maximus takes pride in his “clever poem” (σοφὸν πῶμα) and its “clever words” (σοφὰ γράμματα). I discuss his metatextual references to his own verse, and similar strategies in the other poets, below.

Maximus’ verses share a number of techniques and themes: the acrostich; variation in metres (*IMEG* 168: sotadeans, pentameters and hexameters; *IMEG* 169: hexameters and pentameters, concluding in five lines of prose); references to Greek gods, including those with cultural associations (Apollo, the Muses), and to the Greek world in general; and clues to the identity of the poem’s author. The most obvious such clues are the acrostich signatures themselves. *IMEG* 168 contains the text Μ-Α-Ξ-Ι-Μ-Ο-Σ-Δ-Ε-Κ-Ο-Υ-Ρ-Α-Ν-Ε-Γ-Ρ-Α-Ψ-Α (Μάξιμος δεκουρίων ἔγραψα): “Maximus, a Decurion, wrote (it)”. As I will discuss in the conclusion, “signposting” techniques are used to point the reader in the direction of the

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belonged to the *Legio III Cyrenaica*, which places his presence at Kalabsha in the first century AD.

23 Bernand 1969a: 598; Adams 2003: 581.

24 Note that Maximus’ cruellest critic did not notice the acrostich, and perhaps might have been a little kinder if he had (Weill in Sayce 1894: 289).

acrostich, and to help them solve the prose riddle, an isopsephic puzzle, in *IMEG* 169. This puzzle is especially important because it allows the reader to find the name “Maximus” in addition to the name Π-A-K-K-I-O-Σ “Paccius” in the acrostich.<sup>25</sup>

In Maximus’ poem, Greece and Greek culture are the benchmark of civilisation, the Romans are powerful and glorious, and the Aithiopians (for which read the local peoples of Nubia) barbaric. Similar notions are expressed at the same temple in the verse of Julius Faustinus, which dates to c. AD 134, as may be inferred from the reference to Hadrian (emperor AD 117–138), and to M. Petronius Mamertinus (prefect of Egypt AD 133–137). Faustinus is even more concerned with the Roman authorities than Maximus, and more specifically with praise of Hadrian. Yet he too includes local colour: the “singing” Colossi of Memnon, a popular part of the Roman “tourist itinerary” in Egypt; the goddess Isis; and the sands of Egypt. Greek religious and cultural figures are present as well: Apollo, Pallas Athene and the Muses. Like Maximus, Faustinus therefore places himself on the side of Roman officialdom and Greek culture, perhaps in opposition to the “neighbouring mob” (Egyptians? Nubians?) of the end of the preserved portion of the inscription.

The inscription of Catilius comes from the Isis temple at Philae, upstream from Kalabsha, and dates to around 7 BC, so earlier than any of the acrostichs from Kalabsha. This verse contains the most direct and skilfull allusions to its acrostich of any of the poems considered here, as I will discuss further in the conclusion. The Nile and the cataracts are mentioned, but there is no overt, direct invocation of Roman authority or Greek culture. These are left to be inferred.

#### 4. Bu Njem: Q. AVIDIUS QUINTIANUS / *Porcius Iasucthan cent(urio) leg(ionis) f(ecit)* *c(urante) mac(istro)*<sup>26</sup>

##### 1.

Quaesii multum quot memoriae tradere(m)  
Agens prae cunctos in hac castra milites  
Votum commune{m} proque reditu exercitu  
Inter priores et futuros reddere(m).

25 Note, however, that the text of this puzzle is uncertain; for an alternative reading, see Garulli in this volume

26 Text and translation of both after Adams 1999.

**Dum** quaero mecum digna divom nomina, 5  
**Inveni** tandem nomen et numen deae  
**Votis** perennem quem dicare(m) in hoc loco.  
**Salutis** igitur quandiu{m} cultores sient,  
**Qua** potui sanxi nomen et cunctis dedi  
**Veras** salutis lymphas tantis ignibus 10  
**In** istis semper harenacis collibus  
**Nutantis** Austri solis flammis fervidas,  
**Tranquille** ut nando delenirent corpora.  
**Ita** tu qui sentis magnam facti gratiam  
**Aestuantis** animae fuculari spiritum 15  
**Noli** pigere laudem voce reddere  
**Veram** qui voluit esse te sanum tibi  
**Set** protestare vel salutis gratia.

I have sought much what (line 3 common vow) to hand down to posterity  
 acting in command of all the soldiers in this camp  
 and (what) common vow, for the return of the army  
 to render up among previous and future (vows?).  
 While seeking privately worthy names of gods 5  
 I found at last the divine name of a goddess,  
 which to consecrate, everlastingly in vows, in this place.  
 Therefore, as long as there should be worshippers of Salus  
 I have sanctified (her) name in the way I could, and I have given to all  
 the true waters of safety, amid such fires 10  
 in those always sandy hills  
 of the south wind causing to shimmer (*nutantis*?) the fiery flames of the sun  
 so that by swimming peacefully they might soothe their bodies  
 and so you who feel great gratitude for (this) deed,  
 that the spirit of your burning soul is revived 15  
 do not be reluctant to render genuine praise with your voice  
 (of him) who wanted you to be healthy for your own benefit  
 but bear witness even for the sake of Salus.

## 2.

Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) M(arco) Aurelio [[Antonino Pio Felici Aug(usto) sacerdoti]]  
 amplissimo pontifici maximo trib(unicia) pot(estate) [[V]] co(n)s(uli) [[IIII]]  
 p(atri) p(atriciae) et  
 [[M(arco) Aurelio Alexandr]o nobilissimo Caes(ari) d(omini) n(ostri) [[Antonini]]  
 Aug(usti) [[fil(io)]] Aug(usto)  
 Flavius Sossianus v(ir) e(gregius) vice praesidis Numidia per vexillationem  
 leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae) p(iae) v(indicis) [[Antoniniana]] devotissimi numini  
 eorum 5  
**Portam** vetustate conlapsam lapidi quadrato arco curvato restituit  
**Omnes** praeteriti cuius labore vitabant  
**Rigido** vigore iuvenum tertia Augustani fecerunt

|                                                                           |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Creto consilio hortante Parato magistro                                   |    |
| Iuncta virtus militum paucorum velocitas ingens                           | 10 |
| Vsui compendio lapides de longe adtractos chamulco                        |    |
| Sub arcata militum virtus funib(us) cannabinis strictis                   |    |
| Iam nunc contendunt fieri cito milites omnes                              |    |
| Arta virtute sua opera aeternale fecerunt                                 |    |
| Subsequentes stipendiis antecessorum onestia bona sumebant                | 15 |
| Urguente tempore hiemis necumqua(m) cessaverunt                           |    |
| Celerius excelsae turres quater divisae cum voce militum a terra venerunt |    |
| Torrens virtus [[leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae) p(iae) v(indicis)]]            |    |
| Haec ut fierent milites omnes sibi zelum tradebant                        |    |
| Animadvertentes quod priores sibi vestigia fecissent                      | 20 |
| Nunc et ipsi titulis suis virtutis devotionis ornaverunt                  |    |
| Contententes si amplius esset athuc opera fecissent                       |    |
| Ex numero militum quidam amplius voluntatem suam dederit                  |    |
| Necumquam operam suam erupi exhibuerunt                                   |    |
| Tantus fuit eis zelus magna vir [---]                                     | 25 |
| Laetis temporibus honoribu[s ---]                                         |    |
| Effecta opera gaudet aeterna militum virtus                               |    |
| Gemma ut auro cluditur sic castram porta decorat                          |    |
| Florida Tertia Augusta legio cum magna virtute                            |    |
| Curavit faciendum devotionis suae honorem                                 | 30 |
| Muneri quoque dictatores strenue cesserunt                                |    |
| Animosos duo contemnentes residuum turpis oppresserat                     |    |
| Capita versorum relegens adgnosce curantem.                               |    |

In honour of imp. Caes. M. Aurelius Antoninus *pius felix augustus*, priest  
supreme, *pontifex maximus*, with tribunician power for the fifth time, consul for  
the fourth time, *pater patriae* and  
of M. Aurelius Alexander, most noble Caesar, son of our master Antoninus  
*augustus, augustus* (himself)

Flavius Sossianus, *vir egregius*, vice *praeses* of Numidia, through the *vexillatio*  
of the Legion III Augusta *pia, victrix, Antoniana*, (all) devoted to their divinity 5  
restored the gate which had collapsed through age, by means of squared stone in a  
curved arch.

The labour of which (thing) all (our) predecessors avoided  
(that), with firm vigour of the warriors, the third Augustans did  
by fixed design, encouraged by Paratus (?) the magister  
linked (were?) the valour of a few soldiers (and) vast speed 10  
for use, by a saving of effort, stones drawn from afar by traction engine  
under the arches, the valour of the soldiers, with hempen ropes drawn tight  
now all the soldiers strive that it be quickly done  
by extreme (?) valour they did their eternal work  
following upon the service of their predecessors they acquired honourable  
advantage (?) 15

with the period of winter pressing they never ceased  
quickly the lofty towers, divided into four (stages?), came from the earth to the  
accompaniment of the voice of the soldiers  
the rushing valour of the Legion III Augusta *pia victrix*

that this should be done all the soldiers handed zeal to themselves (sic)  
 noticing that their predecessors had made traces for them 20  
 now they too adorned (them? *vestigia*?) with their own marks (?) of valour (and?)  
 obedience/loyalty  
 eager (lit. "striving") that, if there were more (to do), they should as well have  
 done the work (= *operam*)  
 (lit.) of the body of soldiers, one gave (unmotivated perfect subjunctive?) his  
 enthusiasm more (or *quidam* = *quisque*?)  
 never did they allow their work to be broken off  
 so great was their zeal, and great ... 25  
 in happy times ... honours  
 the eternal valour of the soldiers rejoices in the completed work.  
 As a jewel is set in gold, so the gate decorates the camp.  
 The flourishing Third Legion Augusta with great valour  
 saw to it that it paid the honour of its obedience/loyalty 30  
 to the task as well the "dictators" strenuously devoted themselves (?)  
 ?  
 reading the start of the verses, identify him who saw to it.

Like Kalabsha, Bu Njem (ancient Gholaiia) was a Roman military outpost, in the Libyan desert. Construction of the fort at Bu Njem began in AD 201, as part of Septimius Severus' programme to secure the southern desert frontier of the African provinces. Ostraca from the site are a valuable source for the daily lives and linguistic practices of soldiers of the Legio III Augusta stationed there in the second century (Marichal 1992; Adams 1994). Two centurions left Latin verse inscriptions with acrostichs. Although these share the same general context and content of the Lower Nubian acrostich inscriptions – prayers or celebrations of Roman power, made in the name of members of Roman garrisons – their idiom and literary style are rather different. The authors of the Bu Njem inscriptions were not capable of producing the same quality of literary verse as the poets of Kalabsha and Philae (or Kandahar), and their Latin is marked by many features which indicate that they did not have a native-level command of the language.

The earliest verse is dated to AD 202–203, and spells out the name "Q. Avidius Quintianus" in the acrostich (Rebuffat 1987). Avidius' text bears certain points of comparison with the Lower Nubian inscriptions, and in particular that of Faustinus: he writes about his position in the Roman army, dedicates to the goddess of the place, and includes local colour, with his references to the sand dunes and burning sun of the Sahara. M. Porcius Iasucthan set up his inscription in AD 222 (Rebuffat 1995), with the acrostich *Porcius Iasucthan cent(urio) leg(ionis) f(ecit) c(urante) mac(istro)*. His text is less personal and more official in flavour, and recounts his supervision of a building project, all the while praising the honour and glory of the Emperor and the Roman army. We might note in pass-

ing that for Iasucthan, as for Sophytos, repairing a building which had been allowed to fall into disrepair is something to take pride in.

Both Avidius and Iasucthan state, a little vaguely, that the person named in the acrostich “took care of” it, and, as I will discuss in the following section, the case for the named figure’s personal authorship of the poem is therefore not as good as for the other acrostich inscriptions discussed here. Adams (1999: 109) makes the point that, even if neither of the two centurions wrote the texts themselves, the standard of the poems represents at least a kind of upper limit to their linguistic and literary capabilities: “Both centurions allowed their names to be attached to specimens of substandard/peculiar Latinity, and that implies either that they wrote the texts themselves, or were not capable of finding fault with their content”.

Avidius, whose name does not enable us to say anything much about his ethnic origin, writes a reasonably competent but in places substandard Latin. He seems to have received some education, and there are some suggestively literary turns of phrase.<sup>27</sup> Iasucthan, on the other hand, whose name betrays his Libyan origin, has managed to produce “one of the most incompetent hexameter poems ever written” (Adams 1999: 113).<sup>28</sup> The lines uniformly do not scan and the phraseology is awkward (the poet has a preference for concluding a line with a third-person verb in the past tense). It is possible that the needs of the acrostich have done something to contribute to the idiosyncracies and failings of the Bu Njem poems, but Iasucthan, at least, is also clearly a non-native user of Latin. Yet the poem has literary aspirations, and in several places appears to contain indirect allusions to lines from Vergil (on literary quotation in these poems, see further below).

## 5. Authorship and Signposting Techniques

It is not certain that these poems were composed and painted or inscribed by the persons named in their acrostichs. But in most if not all cases (I am inclined to omit Iasucthan, who does not use the first person), the “signature” in the acrostich represents at least a *claim* to personal authorship, a claim bolstered by the kinds of in-text signposts I will go on to discuss. This claim to authorship is significant in itself and in the present instance – where my interest is in the putative authors’ strategies of self-represent-

27 My discussion here is a summary of points discussed more fully by Adams 1999.

28 One popular contender for the “worst poet of Antiquity” is the sixth-century Egyptian administrator Dioscorus of Aphrodito: for varying impressions of the literary quality of his verses, see Baldwin 1984 and MacCoull 1988.

ation – is perhaps even more important than the poems’ “real” authorship. If there was a “real” author behind any of these texts, he was writing in the persona of the figure named in the acrostich, and his verse was designed to reflect on that figure, not on himself. Since the main aim of this article is to say something productive about the Kandahar inscription, I should state that I think the case for Sophytos’ personal authorship is rather good, given his emphasis on his own literary education.

It is a common feature of acrostich inscriptions that their authors feel the need to draw attention to the acrostich in some way. In the most straightforward sense, this can be achieved by laying the letters out on the stone so that they align neatly. Catilius’ inscription does this especially clearly. Sophytos goes a step further and repeats the letters of the acrostich in a separate column in the left margin of the inscription, lest the reader should miss the point.<sup>29</sup> He appears to consider this sufficient, and does not make any additional reference to the acrostich in the text itself, but the other authors discussed here find it difficult to resist teasing the reader with hints. Part of the appeal of modern acrostichs may be that they are well concealed, even that they may pass unnoticed by someone whom they are intended to insult,<sup>30</sup> but the makers of these ancient acrostich signatures go to every effort to help their readers to recognise the secret message.

Among the inscriptions from the region of the first cataract, Maximus draws the most specific and direct allusions to the acrostich structure of his inscriptions. *IMEG* 168 concludes “trusting in the first twenty-two letters”; a better translation might be “trusting in the twenty-two *first* letters”. Maximus tells the reader where to look, if not what to look for. *IMEG* 169, a shorter and more straightforwardly dedicatory verse, is less self-conscious about its own literary merits, but contains a more complicated puzzle, and offers a “prize” for resolution of this puzzle: the one who recognises it (τοῦ ἀναγνόντος) will share in the benefits of the dedicatory prayer (προσκύνημα) to Mandulis along with the author (τοῦ γράψαντος). The name Paccius is given, unsigned, in the acrostich. The isopsephic puzzle to find the second part of the author’s name, Maximus, is more explicitly phrased as a riddle. “To find out the name of the one who wrote this,

29 Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004: 230–231, fig. 1.

30 Some examples: in 1939 the magazine *Poetry* published a classically-themed ode by Rolfe Humphries with an acrostich calling Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University and a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, a “horse’s ass”. The editor subsequently issued an apology and banned Humphries from the publication. A certain concise Anglo-Saxon insult is, predictably, a modern favourite: R. Mendick, *Coded Message to the Boss at the Daily Expletive*. The Independent, 7 January 2001; C. Good, *Schwarzenegger Sticks It to Assemblyman, Acrostic Style*. The Atlantic, 28 October 2009.



count two times two hundred and twenty-one". As discussed above, this is the sum of the numerical values of the letters in the Greek spelling of the name *Maximos*. Faustinus and Catilius stand, in many ways, in very different places on the spectrum of self-referential poetic indulgence. Faustinus, in the preserved section of his verse, makes no reference at all to the hidden acrostich or to his own skill. All praise is directed at Hadrian, and Faustinus in general appears to be acting in a more professional capacity, as an agent of Roman authority, than as a private dedicator keen to demonstrate his personal accomplishments. Catilius' entire poem is an extended metatextual reference to its hidden acrostichs, but the deliberate double meanings he employs, and the subtlety of his references to his own skill and the poem's structure, allow it to be read on a different level, simply as an elegant and witty verse, even if one does not recognise the acrostich. The "line of a skillful mortal" (τὸ εὐτέχνου φωτὸς στίχον) may refer to the horizontal lines of the verse or to the two vertical lines of the acrostich – lines which, as it happens, are particularly carefully aligned in the physical inscription. Likewise the "historical/narrative piece" (ἱστορικὴν σελίδα) may refer to the verse, but here the choice of vocabulary is still more ambiguous. A σελίς can be a column, such as in a text on papyrus, and ἱστορικός may mean "precise" or "accurate" – with, as ever with its cognate terms, implications of "investigation". The acrostich itself has a double meaning, as we can tell from *I Philae* 142: Nikanor is both Catilius' own alternate name, and the name of his father. Even the reference to the composition of the acrostich is witty, self-referential and even self-deprecating ("I only have a '-ros' left!"), rather than direct. These techniques take the genre of the "stop and read me, friend" Greek inscription and rework it in a manner which is almost subversive.

At Bu Njem, Avidius does not make any reference to the acrostich. Iasucthan offers the reader a guide to locating the acrostich: he should go back over the beginnings of the lines and thus recognise the name of "the one who took care of it" (*capita versorum relegens adgnosce curantem*). What precisely Iasucthan took care of is not specified, and the ambiguity between seeing to the building project and to the inscription may well be intentional.

In addition to pride in their acrostichs, the Arachosian, Nubian and Libyan verses also share a certain literary self-consciousness. Again, this is expressed to varying degrees. Sophytos' verse, the product of his youthful cultivation of the *arete* of Apollo and the Muses, is overtly intellectual, self-conscious in its own erudition. He clearly has his audience in mind, and is concerned to project a particular image of himself: he is successful and cultured, a man who has restored the fortune and reputation of himself and his family. Sophytos' emphasis on his education is so insistent that it is

tempting to read some insecurity into it. His learning is the very Greek learning of Apollo and the Muses, and of *recherché* literary vocabulary. The verse is composed in elegaic couplets, and a number of the words are rarities, only otherwise to be found in occasional poems (e.g. line 1, κοκυῶν, “ancestors”: Callim. *Hec.* fr. 137 Hollis – Hollis [2011: 114] calls it “fabulously rare”; line 3, τυννός, “so small”: Callim. fr. 471 Pfeiffer, Theoc. *Id.* 24.139) or antiquated terms more usually found in Homer (e.g. line 4 εἰνός, “deprived”; discussed in Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004: 242–244, with other examples; see also Hollis 2011: 113–116). A more direct Homeric homage appears in line 11, where Sophytos apparently echoes the opening lines of the *Odyssey* (Sophytos line 11: ἰὼν εἰς ἄστεα πολλά; *Od.* 1.3: πολλῶν δ’ ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἑγών). This kind of Homeric touch was not unusual in the literary tradition of Greek epitaphs within which the inscription of Sophytos is cast, and reference to this particular line was especially popular: a nice way of summing up a well-travelled man’s life and achievements, within a familiar Homeric framework.<sup>31</sup> So Sophytos’ reference, while oblique, is probably not accidental. Sophytos’ sense of honour and reputation emerges in his frequent references to family fortune, praise, the restoration of highly-visible symbols of wealth such as the family tomb, and the joy which his new wealth and status bring to those who wish him well. His one reference to the text of his inscription is to oral performance rather than written composition: he imagines the stele “speaking” (line 18), with the emphasis on its communication to its reader, not the process by which he wrote it.

Maximus (*IMEG* 168) dwells at some length on his own process of poetic inspiration – with divine help – and the expressiveness and complexity of the results. He has composed and written down a “complex song” (ποικίλον αἰοιδήν) inspired by his “wise soul” (σοφῆς ψυχῆς μου), which will leave the literary critics no point of complaint (ψόγον ἄλλοτρίοις ἤθεσιν ἀπολιπὼν ἄδηλον). He is urged to speak his “clever poem” (σοφὸν πόνημα) aloud, presumably by some mortal companion or superior. Then he receives encouragement from the divine, as Mandulis descends from Olympus – a curious place to find a Nubian god, but in the spirit of the broad-minded syncretism of cult and dedicatory practice at Kalabsha and many other Egyptian temples of this period. Mandulis urges Maximus to sing in “sweet Greek verse” (γλυκερὴν ἐφ’ Ἑλλάδα μουσαν), driving away barbaric Ethiopian speech – whomsoever we consider that “barbaric speech” to have belonged to. Finally, the spoken and sung word is set down in writing: “you yourself [Mandulis] told me to inscribe these clever

31 Bernard – Pinault – Rougemont 2004: 240–241.

verses (σοφὰ γράμματα), in order that they be viewed by all without flattery”.

Faustinus’ inscription is not complete, and it may be that a reference to the acrostich was contained in the missing latter portion of the text: the final lines of the poem are a popular place for such a reference among the other poets. His initial image of Apollo and the Muses “pouring down happy verses” is rather subtle and indirect as a self-reference, and the poem feels in general more elegant and less forced in comparison to Maximus and others (see the discussion of Courtney 1995: 245–246). Catilius, in contrast, is clever and self-referential to the point of referring not just to the acrostich, but to his own process in composing it. Double meanings are employed to great effect – as already discussed – and the poem can be read in a sense which leaves the reader entirely innocent of the acrostich. He combines this technical skill with neat and elegant phraseology (λιταῖς ἱστορίαις λιτὸν πόνον).

If one were being uncharitable, one might say that the poets of the Libyan inscriptions fail to make reference to their composition because they are aware that the results are not worth claiming credit for. The general quality of their Latin is not good, never mind their literary quality. Yet they aspire to high culture and, the verse of Iasuchthan, perhaps, contains deliberate Vergilian echoes which may be the product of an exposure to Latin literature in written or oral form (e.g. line 28 *gemma ut auro cluditur sic castram porta decorat*; *Aen.* 10.134 *qualis gemma micat fulvum quae dividit aurum*; see Adams 1999: 120). Like Sophytos’ possible *Odyssey* reference, these allusions, if they are there, are far from being any direct quotation, and might derive from literary phrases which had passed into common currency. Whether or not they believed that they had achieved it, the poets of Bu Njem were attempting a style of literary Latin, and their use of the acrostich is bound up with this attempt at producing an impressive demonstration of high culture for public display.

It should also be noted that each of these poets handles meter very differently. Sophytos’ verse contains a couple of curious mistakes, but Hollis’ (2011) recent suggestion that these come from the unfortunate intervention of the stonemason, rather than a slip on the part of the otherwise very competent poet is an attractive one. Maximus likes to show off his knowledge of different meters in a single piece. Iasuchthan botches his “hexameters” entirely.

Judging the literary skill, linguistic competence, and cultural or ethnic backgrounds of the authors of these acrostich inscriptions is a tricky exercise, and it becomes trickier still when we attempt to compare them. The acrostich should, I would suggest, be seen as an important factor in making some of these poems seem trite, overworked and laboured. Possibly, some

of these poets would have been capable of producing (slightly) better verse if they had not been bound by the acrostich.

Why, then, did they choose to make acrostich inscriptions? These inscriptions, set up on major temples or at roadsides, are public displays, but public displays of what? Was it simply a matter of demonstrating literary skill, and the personal prestige to be derived from this, or were other factors at work? As I noted in my introduction, the Roman army is an important trans-regional context for some of these pieces: on this basis alone, the Nubian and Libyan inscriptions must be considered as an entirely separate group to that of Sophytos. The Nubian “concentration” of acrostich inscriptions may be explained at least in part by the presence at Kalabsha and Philae of two important temples which received heavy official patronage, and the presence in the vicinity of large numbers of Roman military personnel. The Roman army might also help the practice of making acrostich inscriptions to “travel” from one such garrison to another. Despite their separation in time and space, there may therefore be some link between the Kalabsha and Philae acrostichs on the one hand, and the Bu Njem ones on the other.

But there is a further question to be addressed, which is whether the apparent concentration of acrostich verse inscriptions with literary aspirations in areas at the fringes of the Graeco-Roman world, made by people whose ethnic identity, linguistic behaviour and cultural affinities may be uncertain or insecure, suggests that this form is being used specifically to protest ethnic and cultural belonging. Some of the Roman inscriptions state very directly their maker’s membership of the Roman army or position vis-à-vis the Roman official apparatus. Julius Faustinus’ Latin inscription from Kalabsha is an outright panegyric of the Emperor Hadrian and of Roman authority in general. Expressions of affinities for Greek culture stop short, in each case, of a direct claim of Greek identity, but then stating membership of an army and claiming membership of an ethnic group are two very different things.

The overt name-dropping of Greek cultural and religious reference points can lead to a suspicion that the author is in some way insecure in his identity or of his education. Both Sophytos and Maximus have been viewed in this light, and of all the inscriptions considered here these two provide the best comparison for one another. They raise similar kinds of questions about culture, ethnic identity and self-representation. They appeal to certain common cultural tropes, in particular Greek religious and literary culture, and more specifically Apollo and the Muses (who also feature in Faustinus’ verse). Their authors very actively seek to present themselves and their social and cultural background in particular ways, in the face of what modern scholarship might view as more ambiguous sig-

nals about their ethnicity, education, social status, and even native language. They were produced, of course, in very different geo-political contexts, and their authors – aside from their self-consciousness in the epigraphic act and attachments, of varying degree, to Greek culture – probably had little in common. But one way of, as it were, rehabilitating the inscriptions of Sophytos and Paccius Maximus from an excessively ethnicity-based analysis is to examine the common themes and strategies employed in their composition. The question of who these individuals “were” is only one of the questions we should ask of their inscriptions. Equally important are the questions of who they thought they were, what they hoped their inscriptions to achieve, and why they chose such elaborate and sophisticated techniques of word-play and made such a conspicuous display of their erudition.

In the introduction, I raised the question of an inscription-maker’s awareness of outside scrutiny, and his projection onto such an observer of judgements about his own actions and identity – and more particularly about actions which may be perceived negatively and identities which may be open to challenge. These inscriptions all share a consciousness of being looked at and read, and of their authors or commissioners being judged by the reader. There are certain ways of forestalling such judgements, and some of the writers discussed in this paper attempt to do so more deliberately than others, by telling the reader what kind of person (profession, political loyalties, education) they consider themselves to be. What might an acrostich contribute to such a programme? An acrostich – especially one which is repeated in a separate column, like that of Sophytos – is an excellent way of capturing a reader’s interest and forcing the composer’s cleverness on their attention. It might also – intentionally or unintentionally – be distracting in some way, directing the reader’s first impressions towards the clever word-play rather than the perhaps not-very-good poem. Set on a building among other inscriptions, an acrostich verse may also press the reader to compare it to the less literary texts which surround it and judge it more positively. Word-play and literary style can be used to give out all sorts of signals about the composer or commissioner’s social status, cultural identity, religious or ethnic affinities. Such signals are very deliberately worked in to in the inscriptions of Sophytos and Paccius Maximus.

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## IV. Case Studies



*Versus anacyclici:*  
The Case of *P. Sorb. 72<sup>v</sup>* (= adesp. com. fr. 52 *PCG*)

Krystyna Bartol

*Non per singulos apices, per singula tamen verba replicantur.*  
Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistle* 9.14.5

An analogy for the idea of verse-making I am going to deal with would be something like the *diaulos* or – as in the case of the text I shall concentrate my attention on – the *dolichos dromos* which has many rounds (πολλὰ ἀνακυκλοῦται).<sup>1</sup> If we apply this model to the genre of the so-called *versus anacyclici*, we find one feature which can be regarded as essential: the presence of pairs of lines within which the words of the first line are repeated in a companion line in a different order, but in the same metre. Very often one anacyclic couplet constitutes a whole poem, but the text I am interested in here is an example of an anacyclic poem consisting of several pairs of such distichs running there and back.

Modern scholars view *versus anacyclici* in relation to the palindrome<sup>2</sup> (which is, however, a wider category, since it allows not only words, but also characters and lines as segments to be read backwards), but we do not have incontrovertible evidence for treating both as the same conceptual unit in the period earlier than the fifth century AD.<sup>3</sup>

Although scholars maintain that the archaic and classical period have nothing to contribute to the anacyclic textual corpus, there are occasional examples of literary passages from pre-Hellenistic times not incompatible with the strategy of backwards movements of words. The early existence of anacyclic procedure finds some support in the Homeric poems. There are two telling passages in the *Iliad* where the positioning of words comes

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1 Cf. Parmenion, *Anth. Pal.* 9.342, who uses this kind of imagery while talking about literary matters.

2 Cf. Preisendanz 1949: 133–139, Luz 2010: 211.

3 Cf. Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 14.4–6 with Styka's (2008: 246–248) comment.

close to the *ratio retrograda*. I mean the Iliadic uses of analogical phrase-formations at the end of the line and at the beginning of the next verse:

τοῦ δ' ἐγὼ ἀντίος εἶμι καὶ εἰ πυρὶ χεῖρας ἔοικεν,  
εἰ πυρὶ χεῖρας ἔοικε, μένος δ' αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ,  
 (Il. 20.371–372)

and

τῷ ὀαριζέμεναι, ἃ τε παρθένος ἡθέός τε  
παρθένος ἡθέός τ' ὀαρίζετον ἀλλήλοιιν.  
 (Il. 22.127–128)

The phrase-structure may be regarded as a kind of rhetoric *epanalepsis* (the emotional repetition of the phrase without any element put in between<sup>4</sup>), but the running over of the repetition from one verse to the next one reaffirms the author's anacyclic way of thinking.

Late in the sixth or at the latest during the first three decades of the fifth century BC the anacyclic model of verse-making is reflected in a poetic exchange between Simonides and Timocreon of Rhodes. We learn that Simonides wrote a couplet ridiculing Timocreon's poetic praise of Heracles. In the Simonidean version it was built up by the rearrangement both of the words used in the first line and of the metre:

Μοῦσά μοι Ἀλκμήνης καλλισφύρου υἱὸν ᾄειδε.  
 υἱὸν Ἀλκμήνης ᾄειδε Μοῦσά μοι καλλισφύρου.  
 (Anth. Pal. 13.30)

Muse, sing for me of the son of fair-ankled Alcmena.  
 Of the fair-ankled son of Alcmena sing, Muse, for me.<sup>5</sup>

Timocreon repayed him for the mockery with a couplet in which he achieved a parodistic effect by placing the focus on two levels of the formal elements of the Simonidean distich: the shifting words and, consequently, the transformation of the hexameter into the trochaic tetrameter:<sup>6</sup>

Κῆία με προσήλθε φλυαρία οὐκ ἐθέλοντα.  
 οὐκ ἐθέλοντά με προσήλθε Κῆία φλυαρία.  
 (Anth. Pal. 13.31)

Nonsense from Ceos came to me against my will.  
 Against my will there came to me nonsense from Ceos.<sup>7</sup>

4 See the definition presented by Alexander, *Fig.* pp. 19.32–20.4 Spengel (where Il. 20.371–372 is quoted).

5 Tr. Campbell 1991–1992: 518.

6 The scansion of these two lines is not entirely straightforward. Timocreon's effort is metrically rough, particularly at the start of the hexameter. Perhaps this roughness is a part of the joke or Timocreon's playful mockery of Simonides' couplet.

7 Tr. Campbell 1991–1992: 97.

In both cases the change of the metre in the second line weakens a little the idea of anacyclivity, but the poems are noteworthy because of their word-play<sup>8</sup> as their framework.

The method of anacycliv *metathesis*<sup>9</sup> was presented in a highly uncomplimentary context by Plato in the *Phaedrus* (264d)<sup>10</sup> where the language experiment in the Midas epigram<sup>11</sup> (the verses<sup>12</sup> can be rearranged without changing the sense of the whole poem) amounts, in Socrates' opinion, to a violation of the rules of a poem's organic unity and poetic excellence.<sup>13</sup>

An anacycliv mindset is also suggested by the metrical tricks employed in the third century BC by Castorion of Soloi and Sotades of Maronea. The former made the interchangeability of the metra of the iambic trimeter the key-device of composing his hymn to Pan (*SH* 310).<sup>14</sup> The latter one employed the change of word order of Homeric hexameter lines as the basis for composing his "sotadeans".<sup>15</sup>

The popularity of anacycliv word-play is attested in the Graeco-Roman world at least by the eight couplets ascribed to Nicodemus of Heraclea, living probably under Nero and Vespasianus.<sup>16</sup> Latin Imperial literary production also provides us with relatively rich evidence on the idea of anacyclivity, but Latin poetry is not the subject of my research here.<sup>17</sup>

A valuable find for purposes of getting some idea of the employment of anacycliv verses is the piece written on the verso of the papyrus, unanimously dated to the late third century BC, discovered in the Egyptian town Ghoran and published by Jouget in 1906<sup>18</sup> (now referred to as ades. fr. 52

8 Poltera (2008: 89 n. 164) calls such epigrams "Stilübung".

9 The term *metathesis* was employed by ancient critics, see Greenberg 1958: 262–270. For the relationship of the idea of *metathesis* and Plato's conception of a poem's excellence see de Jonge 2008: 368–369.

10 Written c. 360 BC.

11 Χαλκή παρθένος εἰμί, Μίδα δ' ἐπὶ σήματι κείμεναι. | ὄφρ' ἂν ὕδωρ τε νάη καὶ δένδρεα μακρὰ τεθήλη, | αὐτοῦ τῇδε μένουσα πολυκλαύτου ἐπὶ τύμβου, | ἀγγελέω παριοῦσι Μίδας ὅτι τῇδε τέθαιπται.

12 See De Vries' (1969: 213) comment on Socrates' words οὐδὲν διαφέρει αὐτοῦ πρῶτον ἢ ὕστατον τι λέγεσθαι, "it is the order of the lines which is pointed to here".

13 See Armstrong 1995: 222 and Too 1995: 38–39.

14 Cf. Bing 1985: 502–509.

15 Cf. West 1987: 74. See Demetr. *Eloc.* 189, who shows how Sotades fr. 4a Powell rearranges the word order of *Il.* 22.133. Cf. also Mart. 2.86.1–2.

16 On Nicodemus' poems see Luz 2010: 203–209. On the date of Nicodemus see Page 1981: 542–543.

17 Latin *versus anacyclici* have been presented and examined by Fonda (1982).

18 Jouget 1906: 8–149 (esp. 131–132 and 141).

in *PCG*). The text, restored with almost complete confidence by Jouget (with assistance of Wilcken, Blass and Croiset), contains a speech, shaped like a comedy's prologue, uttered by Eros. It consists of seven pairs of anacyclic iambic trimeters (in which phrases of the shape "article + noun", "preposition + noun", and "pronoun + noun" are treated as a single unit):

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Ἔρως Ἀφροδίτης υἱὸς ἐπιεικὴς [ν]έος,<br>νέος ἐπιεικὴς υἱὸς Ἀφροδίτης Ἔρως,<br>ἐλήλυθ' [ἀ]γγελῶν τοιοῦτο πρᾶγμά τι,<br>πρᾶγμ[ά] τι τοιοῦτον ἄ[γ]γελῶν ἐλήλυθα,<br>κατὰ τ[ῇ]ν Ἰωνίαν πάλαι γεγενημέν[ο]ν,<br>γεγ[ε]νημένον πάλαι κατὰ τὴν Ἰωνίαν.<br>κόρην νεανίσκος [ν]έαν Τροίζ[ην]ίαν,<br>Τροίζηνίαν [νέαν ν]εανίσκ[ος] κόρην<br>ἐπρίατ' [ἐρασθ]εῖς [ε]ὔ[πορος] πωλουμένην,<br>πωλουμένην εὐπορος ἐ[ρασθ]ε[ι]ς [ἐπρίατο·<br>Τροίζηνιος γεγενημένος κατὰ τοὺς νόμους,<br>κατὰ τοὺς [ν]όμους γεγε[νη]μ[ένος] Τροίζηνιος,<br>ἔχων γυναῖκα κατεβίω· τὸ τέρμ' ἔχεις.<br>ἔχεις τὸ τέρμα· κατ[ε]βίω γυναῖκ' ἔχων.                      | 5  |
| Love, Aphrodite's son, gentle youth,<br>(Youth gentle, son of Aphrodite, Love,)<br>I came, to tell the following romance;<br>(The following romance to tell, I came;)<br>It happened in Ionia long since;<br>(Long since it happened in Ionia.)<br>A rich young man, seeing a maid at Troizen,<br>(At Troizen, seeing a maid, a rich young man,)<br>A prey to love, purchased her at a sale,<br>(Purchased her at a sale, a prey to love;)<br>He changed his nationality by law;<br>(By law his nationality he changed;)<br>He lived a married man. That is the end.<br>(That is the end. He lived a married man.) <sup>19</sup> | 5  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 10 |

Let us add in this place that Eros' speech is followed by a second prologue-like speech delivered by Aphrodite,<sup>20</sup> which – after introductory remarks devoted to the poetic skill of the goddess – provides fragmentary remnants of the summary of a play's plot arranged in the form of an *abecedarius*, verses κατ' ἀλφάβητον (this piece is written on the same side of the papyrus, but by a hand different from the one that wrote Eros' speech<sup>21</sup>). Through careful analysis of the papyrus script and orthographical variants,

19 The text as printed in Kassel and Austin 1995: 18. Tr. Page 1942: 323–325, slightly adapted.

20 Adesp. com. fr. 53 *PCG*.

21 See Körte 1908: 42.

Wilhelm Michel<sup>22</sup> has shown that the *editor princeps* was mistaken to suppose that these two pieces on the verso were written much later than the badly mutilated, anonymous comic text preserved on the recto side. In fact, there may not be a gap of many years between the texts written on the verso and those on the recto of the papyrus. The papyrus fragments do not, however, allow either the confirmation or the denial of any connection between the verso and recto texts<sup>23</sup>.

The text is peculiar. It was once the fashion to see in it nothing but a mere (and not very clever) trick<sup>24</sup> and, consequently, not to take a closer look at it as well as the associations it had. Christine Luz in her brief comments on fr. 52 has recently pointed out that the anacyclitic repetition of lines serves here as a vehicle for giving the described comic plot the appearance of complexity, and certainly goes on to put her suggestion to good use when she proves that the kind of compositional manipulation displayed by the text reduces the banality of both its components (i.e. content and the form).<sup>25</sup>

If we look at this text closely, we can see that it tends to reveal features diametrically opposed to one another. The most striking characteristic of this piece is the coexistence of two mimetic approaches towards two differently functioning models of producing a text. That is, it resembles a *hypothesis* to a comedy and at the same time is intended to form the prologue to a comedy. Thus, it recalls directly two alternative kinds of text – a subliterary text<sup>26</sup> and an artistic composition. Consequently, it paradoxical-

22 Michel 1908: 46.

23 Scholars try to establish the authorship of the piece on the recto. There are some different proposals: Jouget (1906: 146–147) and Jacques (1967: 395) point to Menander, Wilamowitz (1908: 250) takes into consideration Machon, Körte (1908: 57) – a poet contemporary to Menander. None of these suggestions has been proved, however, with arguments convincing enough to be accepted. Nesselrath (2011: 134) points out: “we may in effect have quite some, I will not say hard evidence, but at least some grounds for suspecting that this lively scene is not owed to Menander but to one of his great rivals”.

24 See e.g. Wilamowitz 1908: 250: “Sie (i.e. die Prologe) zeigen, zu welchem Geschmacklosigkeit der an sich löbliche Versuch geführt hat, einen langweiligen, aber von der Konvention geheiligten Teil der Komödie interessant zu machen”; Wilamowitz 1925: 144 n. 2: “Aus den Papyri von Ghoran kennen wir einen albernen Prolog des Eros”, Körte 1908: 42 (who speaks about both pseudo-prologues): “ihre Verfasser haben offenbar auf eigentümliche Versspielereien den Hauptwert gelegt”; Hausrath (1914: 447) calls the text “höchst unpoetisch anmutende Spielerei”.

25 Luz 2010: 202.

26 For hypotheses as a kind of subliterary text see Rossum-Steenbeek 1998: 1–52.

ly concentrates on the fulfilment of a purely informative function and also lends itself to being read for the sake of its aesthetics.

This fake prologue shares with the real exponents of this genre a set of features such as the divine speaker, the summary of the plot's background and the outline of how the story proceeded, without, however, providing many details of the plot. The comic-type trimeters, with frequent resolutions, make the piece similar to the standard spoken part of drama.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, it lacks the usual address to the spectators encouraging them to see the whole story on the stage.<sup>28</sup> The speaking Eros reveals instead the end of the story, which is an element more characteristic of the subliterate hypothesis. There are also other echoes of the narrative hypotheses' style:<sup>29</sup> sketching the outline of the content with verbs in the past tense (ἐπρίατο, κατεβίω), using simple sentences, a high number of participles (ἀγγελῶν, γεγενημένον, πωλουμένην, ἐρασθεῖς, γεγενημένος, ἔχων, all repeated twice), and everyday terms (perhaps with one exception – ἐπιεικής). Nevertheless the text admits stylistic features that are banned from hypotheses: the frequent employment of adjectives (ἐπιεικής, νέος, νέαν, εὖπορος, all repeated twice), the absence of particles linking independent sentences, and the verbal repetitions. Several features make it clear that the author composed his piece with definite literary pretensions: the verbal repetitions just mentioned, the effect of the chiasmic order of words put at the beginning and the end of the line within particular distichs, and some instances of anaphoric usage of words (this figure of speech is strengthened in lines 7 and 8 by the fact that the disyllabic νέαν is a part of the anaphorically used four-syllable νεανίσκος).

We may say that our piece, with its mixture of features characteristic of subliterate texts and those defining a text as literary, involves tensions between alternative values: simplicity of content and a relatively refined mode of presentation.

The crucial question remains, however, to be answered: What was this hybrid formation composed for and what readership did its author intend to address? In other words, how does the piece function within its context? It has been suggested that this little poem occupies an intermediate position between the initial and the final phase in the formation of a new category of secondary literature, namely the dramatic hypothesis.<sup>30</sup> I consider this

27 For the metrical analysis of the text see Michel 1908: 45–46.

28 As e.g. in Menander's *Dyskolos*, 45–46; *Perikeiromene*, 170–171; *Sikyonioi*, 23–24.

29 For the analysis of hypotheses' constituent elements see Rossum-Steenbeek 1998: 1–52.

30 See Körte 1908: 42: "Als Inhaltsangaben in Prologform, die nur gelesen werden sollen, bilden sie ... eine interessante Zwischenstufe zwischen den wirklichen



proposal problematic since it appears too risky to trace hypotheses' genealogy to the plays' prologues, and consequently to treat our poem as an example of an intermediary stage in the development of the new genre.

If we ask ourselves whether these anacyclitic verses may be interpreted as a parody of metrical hypotheses to comedies, we should say that this category does not seem to be relevant to an investigation of verses composed c. 200 BC, that is, in almost the same period as when this type of subliterate text began to be produced (although there are different scholarly opinions about the date of such hypotheses, it is reasonable to accept the view of those who claim that their origin is Hellenistic, having its roots in the activity of Aristophanes of Byzantium<sup>31</sup>). Parody is intended to ridicule the distinctive features of a genre which is already well recognized by the readership. Hence parody finds its most natural justification at the mature stage of the parodied genre's life, but it has no *raison d'être* at an early stage of the development of a genre.<sup>32</sup>

At this point in the quest let me take a step forwards and propound the thesis that our anacyclitic poem constitutes a kind of *griphos*. The riddle, which in the ancient world is commonly expressed in verse, reserves a prominent rôle for word orders that depart from the norms of common speech.<sup>33</sup> It is often a paraphrasing description of the solution, and contains an enumeration of its features. The riddle requires those who want to guess it to search their mind, and consequently it displays the knowledge or erudition of whoever gives the solution.<sup>34</sup>

The same principle seems to be valid for our *adespoton*. It is a statement formulated in iambs which are worded in a puzzling manner. The author did not distribute the constituent elements of the piece at random; rather, his purpose seems to lie in giving the impression that every second line repeats a point of the comedy's plot mentioned in the preceding verse. His strategy of maintaining the linguistic and metrical patterns while deviating from literally repeating the structure of particular metra and sequen-

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Komoedienprologen und den poetischen Hypotheseis der aristophanischen Stücke"; Michel 1908: 48: "Mea quidem sententia hi prologi non longe distant ab illis argumentis, ne dicam, idem sunt quod argumenta metrica. Docent nos, quomodo illa argumenta sunt orta". Deufert (2002: 234) calls the poem "eine Brücke. Zwischen den für den Zuschauer bestimmten Götterprologen und den für den Leser geschriebenen metrischen Argumenta".

31 On his problem see Koster 1962, Budé 1977 and Deufert 2002: 232–237.

32 When a text mimics models recognizable from readers' contemporary literary practice, it tends to be parodying the special characteristics of an author rather than features of a still nascent genre. See Lelièvre 1954: 66–81.

33 For the general characteristics of ancient riddle see Pütz 2007: 192–212.

34 On this function of the riddle see Luz 2010: 139–146.

es of words suggests an analogue to a riddle's enumeration of details. The anacyclic procedure also jokingly mirrors the reader's effort at memorizing the details of the riddle.

The author's liking for the poetics of symmetry is clearly visible in his employment of the anacyclic device of pairing up lines, but may be detected also in the entire compositional design of this poetic game. The *adepoton* exhibits a sequence of three parts. The tripartite form may be represented as follows: 6 + 2 + 6 (the numbers denote how many lines each part consists of). The central part (lines 7–8) is symmetrically preceded and followed by two longer parts, equal in size. Lines 1–6 build up an enumeration indicating the divine speaker of the comedy's prologue,<sup>35</sup> as well as the place and time of the events which are the basis for the action of the play; lines 9–14 seem to present the sketch of the action itself. The central distich appears to be composed in such a way that it makes the title of the play easily identifiable. It is tempting to see in the word *Τροιζηνία* the title of the comedy to be guessed.<sup>36</sup> This word is put into the very middle of the poem, being in fact an essential factor creating the symmetry of this short piece. Moreover, the reversed version (line 8) makes an additional contribution to the point: only here is the jingle of *Τροιζηνίαν νέαν νεανίσκος*

35 It is interesting that, in line 3, the elision of the final vowel of the verb might create a momentary uncertainty over whether Eros is speaking in the first person, or his action is being reported in the third person. Only in line 4 do we get the unelided verb and a clear indication that Eros is speaker. This strikes us as a clever instance in which the author contrives to give us additional information through the reversed version, despite the fact that exactly the same words are being repeated. I wish to express my gratitude to David Petrain for making me aware of this fact.

36 See Körte 1908: 54: "Vielleicht darf man vermuten, daß *Τροιζηνία* der Name des Stückes war". Our knowledge about the plot of the play hypothetically entitled *The Girl from Troizen* is very limited, but the brief account of its principal actions and their antecedents that we may derive from this fake divine prologue exhibits common features of Greek New Comedy (e.g., piracy and the slave trade as a realistic background to the action of comic plays in the late fourth and early third centuries). It can be tentatively suggested that some time before the action of the play begins a girl from Troizen had been kidnapped, sold as a slave to somebody and taken to Ionia, where a rich young man became enamoured of her. The details of the staged story are obscure. It seems likely that the young man did not want to live in an unlawful union with the girl and bought her out of slavery. The Troizenians awarded him the citizenship in thanks for his goodness with regard to the girl. The man married the girl who had with his help regained her freedom. Several points of the plot are not unlike the situation described in the decree from Aegiale on Amorgus (third century BC; *SIG*<sup>3</sup> 521) recording the grant of honours to two men who helped in the restoration of freedom of a group of Aegialians attacked by pirates (for this reference I am grateful to Adam Łajtar). For the interpretation of the inscription see Bielman 1994: 141–144.

thrown into relief, like a phonetic underscoring of the title. The anacyclosis reveals the soundplay.<sup>37</sup>

The *adespoton* may be an example of a riddle which was intended for use in a school context. It fits into a category of riddles which Clearchus mentions in a passage from his work *On Proverbs*, quoted by Athenaeus (10.457e–f). It is aimed at revealing the knowledge and culture of those who guess it. In sympotic contexts<sup>38</sup> the prize for the successful solution was, as Clearchus says, “a crown and congratulations, by which, more than anything else, mutual friendship is rendered sweet”. When played at school, such riddles became an exercise, a part of the teaching method,<sup>39</sup> or a kind of test requiring the pupils’ knowledge of texts commonly read and recommended in the syllabus.<sup>40</sup> Although our riddle is not set as a direct question, as happens in the case of extant examples of such school exercises,<sup>41</sup> it conforms to their qualities by exposing the pursuit of verbal point in the composition of the statement at the expense of its other attributes.

Given that the solution to the riddle is simply the play’s title, which is hinted at in the very middle of the poem and highlighted through its clever construction, the author of this enigma seems to have intended to provide his audience with something easy and plain with respect to the content, but extraordinary and attractive with respect to the words’ arrangement. As a result, the implied reader is invited to take delight not so much in solving the riddle, but rather in being entertained by the quite elaborated manner of its expression.

A poem like our anacyclitic *adespoton* was at home and entertaining in the context of a display of literary erudition and technical skill. It was appropriate to the Greek cultural scenario of Ptolemaic times: playing with the literary background of its “implied reader”, it makes formal experimen-

37 For this observation I am grateful to David Petrain.

38 The presence of quasi anacyclitic couplets at symposia has been attested by Thgn. 137–138. Cf. Poltera 2008: 89 n. 164.

39 See Criatore’s (2005: 230) comment on the existence of verse-writing in ancient schools: “To explain the existence of these versified school exercises, one might invoke the fact that in Egypt, verse-writing had a particular strong tradition, since ‘the Egyptians were crazy about poetry’. But it is likely that generally in ancient schools, verse-writing was more popular than is usually admitted. ... When a student was just starting to develop his wings, imitation of the texts of the poets and competitions with them also translated into a close reproduction of their poetic forms”.

40 See Luz 2010: 143.

41 Cf. e.g. the example of “un libretto d’uso scolastico ... a domanda e risposta”, *PSI* 1.42–43, no. 19. See also Kaster 1984, who examines “the grammarian’s catechism, designed to insure that the student had memorized the pertinent facts of his Homer” in the form of *zetemata* and *lyseis*.

tation the constitutive device of its composition, and thereby produces for the consumption of its readership such a singular impression of oddness and fixation.

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# A Palindrome, an Acrostich and a Riddle: Three Solutions\*

Jerzy Danielewicz

## 1. “Omnino non intellegitur”?

An Attempt at Deciphering a Mysterious Palindrome (*SH* 996.13)

Since it was published by Vincenzo di Benedetto in 1965,<sup>1</sup> the thirteenth line of the Tebtunis papyrus published as *PSI* 15.1481 has been causing problems to classical scholars. The first editor himself states clearly that it is a sequence of syllables which do not give any full sense and adds that it is difficult to detect any grammatical construction in them even if we can spot some words therein. He suspects that the line, being perhaps a kind of tongue-twister, must have been incomprehensible already for the copyist. Therefore, he prints the line as one string of letters throughout, i.e. without dividing it into words:

νορτεπι[συ]γινα[καπ]ρον[.]νορπακαγινυσιπετρον

Di Benedetto’s reading of line 13 was taken over by Hugh Lloyd-Jones and Peter Parsons<sup>2</sup> in the form:

νορτεπισυγινακαπρον[.]νορπακαγινυσιπετρον

The differences between these two versions of the text are of a technical nature and do not influence the general character of the line. As far as its interpretation is concerned, the Oxonian scholars confined themselves to a short remark which has become canonical since then: “omnino non intellegitur”. To my knowledge, their authoritative statement has not been challenged so far, not even by Jessica Wißmann, who in her 2002 article on

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\* The two latter of these three discussions were presented at the conference ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ in response to others’ contributions (cf. Mairs and Benefiel in this volume).

1 Di Benedetto 1965: 18–20.

2 Lloyd-Jones and Parsons 1983: 515 (fr. 996.13).

Hellenistic epigrams as school texts<sup>3</sup> concentrated, among other things, on the Tebtunis papyrus as a whole, translating each of its lines with the notable exception of line 13, where she repeated the words of the editors of the *Supplementum Hellenisticum*. Lloyd-Jones himself, in his *Supplementum Supplementi Hellenistici* (2005),<sup>4</sup> does not add any new comment on the line in question.

Generally speaking, abstaining from any attempt to decipher this difficult line seems to be symptomatic. Dieter Hagedorn in his article *Zwei Spielverse* (1968)<sup>5</sup> just mentions line 13 as palindromic, and so does Raffaella Criore in 1996.<sup>6</sup> The first to give a more extended treatment of the line in question was Christine Luz in her recent book on *technopaegnia* in Greek poetry.<sup>7</sup> Having taken into consideration various aspects of the troublesome palindrome the author comes to the conclusion that it is composed of some legitimate words to which, however, sequences of senseless syllables are added.<sup>8</sup> As a result, she says, the whole verse becomes but gibberish (*Kauderwelsch*)<sup>9</sup> the function of which is not to express anything meaningful, but exclusively to present the principle of palindromes as mirror-symmetrical sequences of linguistic units.

This, theoretically, is possible, and seemingly conforms to what Jessica Wißmann labels “educative by form”. But still the question arises of why that task could not be assigned to a wholly meaningful palindrome. Why, in the small sample consisting of only two examples, was one abnormal case to be included? Were there really in the first century BC (when the palindrome under discussion was inscribed on the papyrus) no more suitable specimens of such palindromic phrases within reach? Was the anthologist left with no other choice?

I think we should try to avoid all these questions by assuming that the palindrome may be sound in respect of sense. Let us ponder this possibility, starting with the function of the problematic line 13 in its immediate context. For Jessica Wißmann<sup>10</sup> these verses to be read in both directions served primarily as an exercise to cope with the *scriptio continua*. Very

3 Wißmann 2002: 214–230, esp. 216–218.

4 See Lloyd-Jones 2005: 121.

5 Hagedorn 1968: 68.

6 Criore 1996: 233 (no. 253).

7 Luz 2010: 185–188.

8 Cf. p. 186: “Es scheint also, daß das Palindrom als spiegelbildliche Buchstabenfolge verfaßt wurde, die aus einzelnen Wörtern und im Übrigen aus sinnlosen Silben zusammengesetzt ist”.

9 Which could be roughly rendered into German as: “Nort auf das Schwein, wo (oder: damit) den Eber ... norpakanin den Schweinen einen Stein”.

10 Wißmann 2002: 218.

well, but a prerequisite of reading continuous blocks of letters was to know how to divide them correctly into *words*, and not quasi-words. Line 13 as gibberish would not serve that purpose at all, which, in my opinion, may be a serious argument for supposing it to be a normal palindrome, structurally corresponding to its neighbour ἤδη μοι Διδς ἄρ' ἀπάτα παρὰ σοί, Διομήδη in line 14.

Of course, line 13 in the transmitted form is extremely mysterious and undoubtedly calls for explanation. I presented a tentative solution of the riddle to Professor Detlev Fehling and other colleagues from the Institut für Klassische Altertumskunde during my stay at Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel in 1989, but then put the topic aside. I take this opportunity to come back to my old proposal, adding some new observations and arguments.

First, let us consider the problem of the structure of the line under discussion. It encompasses a chain of two mirror-symmetrical sequences, A and B, linked by a central letter:

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| A                     | B                   |
| νορτεπισυννακαπρον[.] | νορπακανινυσιπετρον |

To obtain a full-fledged palindrome (which should be, at the same time, reciprocal) we must add both segments, previously having filled in the gap in the middle of the line according to the formula  $C = A + x + B$ . As expected, B is the reversal of A. The central letter must be a short vowel to contribute to the rhythm of a hexameter; for reasons that will become clear in the interpretation offered below, I propose that the vowel is a short *alpha*. When read from the middle, either leftwards or rightwards, the segments A and B must be preceded by this central vowel.

Since *vopt-* is a highly unlikely beginning for a comprehensible hexameter,<sup>11</sup> we are allowed to conclude that, from the linguistic point of view, the outermost *nus* count only in one direction. Of course, this weakens, or even shakes, the idea of line 13 as a perfect palindrome. To yield a sense, it should read:

{ν}ορτεπισυννακαπρον[α]νορπακανινυσιπετρον

The transmitted version with *nu* at both sides may have originated from the epigraphic context. Let us imagine an inscription going around an object, for example a stone. The copyist, involved in reading the text as it goes – with no idea where to start – and trying to find the beginning, slowly recites consecutive syllables. Reaching the key point where the end of the line inscribed meets its beginning, he comes across the final consonant *nu*,

11 The only Greek word beginning with this sequence of letters (as far as we know) is *voptḗ*, “spurge”, attested by Photius.



which by its nature is liable to lengthened pronunciation, and smoothly continues with the reading. The acoustic impression, as well as growing awareness of the fact that the sequence is reversible, influences his recording. To round it off, he puts, illogically, the *nus* at both ends, thus creating a formally correct, but partly incomprehensible palindrome. This is exactly what the inventor of this palindrome wanted to do, hiding its imperfect form in a circular inscription and counting on a “slip of the eye” or a similar “performance” on the part of the reader.

But it is high time to pass to the content of the inscription. It belongs to the category of “descriptive” palindromes (in Luz’s formulation,<sup>12</sup> “die Palindrome, die eine Situation oder Handlung beschreiben”). The sentence pertains to the story of a stone, probably of the stone bearing the palindromic inscription. I propose the following division into words:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
ορτ επι συν ινα καπρον [α]νορπακα νιν υσι πετρον

Commentary:

**1–9** One has to remember that *omicron* can represent either *omicron* or *omega*, cf. the heading of the palindromes at line 11 of the papyrus: ἀναγνοσκόμενοι (for ἀναγι(γ)νωσκόμενοι). The author of the palindrome makes use of both possibilities according to the criterion of metre. The same letter can be treated differently depending on the direction in which the line is read.

**1–5** = ὦρτ' ἐπὶ συν ... κάπρον. For the epic parallels see *Il.* 5.590 = 11.343 Ἔκτωρ ... ὦρτο ... ἐπ' αὐτοῦς and *Il.* 5.783 συσὶ κάπροισιν, 17.21 συὸς κάπρου. Note, however, that the phrase συὸς κάπρος denotes either a wild swine or a domesticated one.<sup>13</sup>

The image of a rolling boulder (ὀλοοίτροχος), dislodged from a cliff and, in its fall, crushing every obstacle on its way until it stops on the plain, appears in a Homeric comparison from the *Iliad* (13.136–142):

Τρῶες δὲ προὔτυψαν ἀολλέες, ἦρχε δ' ἄρ' Ἔκτωρ  
ἀντικρὺ μεμαῶς, ὀλοοίτροχος ὥς ἀπὸ πέτρης,  
ὅν τε κατὰ στεφάνης ποταμὸς χειμάρροος ὥση  
ρήξας ἀσπέτρῳ ὄμβρῳ ἀναιδέος ἔχματα πέτρης·  
ὔψι δ' ἀναθρώσκων πέτεται, κτυπέει δέ θ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ  
ὔλη· ὃ δ' ἀσφαλῆως θέει ἔμπεδον, εἶος ἵκηται  
ἰσόπεδον, τότε δ' οὐ τι κυλίνδεται ἐσσύμενός περ. 140

The Trojans came down on them in a pack, and Hektor led them raging straight forward, like a great rolling stone from a rock face that a river swollen with winter rain has wrenched from its socket

12 Luz 2010: 200.

13 See Ebeling 1885: 650: “κάπρος dicitur non modo aper silvestris sed etiam verres domesticus”.

and with immense washing broken the hold of the unwilling rock face;  
 the springing boulder flies on, and the forest thunders beneath it; 140  
 and the stone runs unwavering on a strong course, till it reaches  
 the flat land, then rolls no longer for all its onrush.<sup>14</sup>

The same image also appears, metaphorically, in an oracle at Herodotus 5.92b describing Cypselus:

Ἡετίων, οὐτίς σε τίει πολύτιτον ἔόντα.  
 Λάβδα κύει, τέξει δ' ὀλοοίτροχον· ἐν δὲ πεσεῖται  
 ἀνδράσι μουνάρχοισι, δικαιοῦσαι δὲ Κόρινθον.

No one honours thee now, Aëtion, worthy of honour –  
 Labda shall soon be a mother – her offspring a rock, that will one day  
 fall on the kingly race, and right the city of Corinth.<sup>15</sup>

Both references are in hexameters and may offer parallels to the stone that killed a pig.<sup>16</sup>

1 The augmented form ὄρτ'(o) is frequent in epic poetry, but note 3. pl. ὄροντο without augment at *Od.* 3.471. The implied subject, as the context suggests, is “this stone”.

4 ἵνα, “where”, indicates here both position in a place, the end-point of the antecedent action expressed by the verb ὄρτ(o) = ὄρτ'(o), and the starting point of the motion implied by the verb [α]νορπακα = [ἀ]νόρπακα/[ἀ]νώρπακα.

6 This must be the predicate in perfect tense, although such a verbal form is not attested elsewhere. I suspect it derives from ἀναρπάζω, “carry off” (cf. Aeol. ὄρπαξ = ἄρπαξ), with *omicron* for *alpha* before a liquid, as frequently in some dialects, particularly in Lesbian.<sup>17</sup> The main peculiarity of ἀν-όρπακα lies in the fact that the initial vowel of the verb is not lengthened to form the “normal” perfect stem. This phenomenon happens in Ionic, compare e.g. pf. ὀρμέαται in Herodotus at 5.121 and plpf. ὀρμέατο at 8.35 from ὀρμάω.

The prefix ἀν(α)-, not changed into ὀν- to conform to the Lesbian, Thessalian, and Arcado-Cyprian usage, is explicable as an epicism in dactylic metres, cf. Sappho fr. 44.11 Voigt: ἀνόρουσε. Dialect variation is nothing strange in palindromes, their primary task being not language uniformity, but just displaying skill in composing any meaningful strings that read the same forwards and backwards.

14 Tr. Lattimore 1952.

15 Tr. Rawlinson 1952.

16 I owe a debt of gratitude to Lisa Maurizio for supplying me with these two references (personal communication).

17 See Buck 1998: 20.

Alternatively, one can look at the third letter of ἀνόρπακα as an amalgamation of two vowels represented by a single letter – in other words, the crasis of the final *omega* and the initial *eta* of two separate words, ἄνω and ἥρπακα. The synecphonesis of these two vowels (not indicated in writing) occurs at Ar. *Ach.* 860 (Boeotian): ἴττω Ἥρακλεις, ἔκαμόν γα τὰν τύλαν κακῶς. Unfortunately, we do not know whether, or to what extent, the sound *ō* prevails there, as is usual in the case of prodelisions of the type ἄνω πιθεῖναι (Ar. *Eccl.* 1111) or ἄνω βάδιζε (Nicostr. Com. fr. 13.4 *PCG*, with Meineke's correction) where a short *e* is elided.

7 The Doric νῖν before an initial vowel may be given a longer, syllable-closing pronunciation, and here, additionally, is lengthened *metri causa* in the princeps position. Analogical treatment of the synonymous pronoun μιν is to be found many a time in epic poetry, cf. *Il.* 10.347: αἰεὶ μιν ἐπὶ νῆας ἀπὸ στρατόφι προτιελεῖν.

8 The word ὅσι pointedly refers to the earlier expression σὺν ... κάπρον, emphasising the cause and effect connection between these two elements of the story.

9 This term (see LSJ s.v. πέτρος I.1) may denote “a boulder forming a landmark” or “tombstone” (added in LSJ *Suppl.* 1996); the former meaning seems to be more probable here.

As is clear from the above commentary, I am prepared to read the enigmatic line 13 as follows:

ὄρτ' ἐπὶ σὺν ἵνα κάπρον [ἄ]νόρπακά νιν ὅσι πέτρον.  
(or [ἄ]νώρπακά)

Accordingly, I propose the following translation:

From the place where (this stone once) attacked a (wild) swine I carried it off to be a landmark for swine.

If the inscription refers to a situation connected with the stone on which it was originally inscribed, it tells us about a man who saw a stone falling on or rolling down a slope upon a swine and decided to utilise it, accordingly, as a landmark indicating the part of the *oikos* or other place in which swine were kept, bred, pastured, etc. The function of that stone may have been, for example, apotropaic.

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## 2. An Unnoticed Second Acrostich in the Kalabsha Inscription of Paccius Maximus (IMEG 168)

The longer of the two Kalabsha Temple graffiti (IMEG 168) which refer to Paccius Maximus<sup>18</sup> – the one containing in its first section (lines 1–22) the acrostich M-A-Ξ-I-M-O-Σ-Δ-E-K-O-Y-P-I-Ω-N-E-Γ-P-A-Ψ-A (Μάξιμος δεκουρίων ἔγραψε – “I, Maximus, a decurion, wrote it”) – since its publication in 1894 has been considered an important document on some cultural and ethnic questions connected with Roman rule in Lower Nubia at the beginning of the Common Era. In the first section of this poem (a Greek *proskynema* intertwined with autobiographical references), the poet<sup>19</sup> tells – to use the succinct recapitulation by Stanley M. Burstein<sup>20</sup> – how he was inspired by the spiritual atmosphere of the temple to compose his poem.

The acrostich indicating its author or commissioner overlaps with the first part of the “autobiographic” narration up to the mention of the first recitation of the “clever poem” (σοφὸν πόνημα). What follows, is an account of the god Mandulis’ descent from Olympus and his encounter with the poet. This new section is separated, graphically, by a *paragaphos*, and clearly indicated as a distinct segment of narration by the adverb of time

18 I am grateful to Valentina Garulli and Rachel Mairs, whose complex interpretations of the Greek inscribed acrostich poems (including the Kalabsha inscriptions) made me think of further inquiry into this fascinating poem. For a general description of the poem under discussion and full bibliography see the contributions of these two authors in this volume, and Mairs 2011. The goal of my short note is only to supplement their observations.

19 I.e., the speaking “I”, the poetic *persona*; I do not touch the question of the possible author of this poem.

20 Burstein 1998: 48.

τότε, “then”. For the reader’s convenience I quote the whole poem although in my analysis I will focus on lines 23–34:<sup>21</sup>

μακάριον ὅτ’ ἔβην ἡρεμίας τόπον ἐσαθρήσαι,  
 ἄερί τὸ ποθεινὸν ψυχῆς πνεῦμ’ ἐπανεῖναι,  
 ξένα μοι βιοτὴ περὶ φρένα πάντοθεν ἐδονεῖτο,  
 ἱστορα κακίης ἐμαντὸν οὐκ ἔχων ἔλεγχον,  
 μύστην τότε κίκλησκε φύσις πόνον γεωργεῖν· 5  
 ὁ σοφὸς τότε ἐγὼ ποικίλον ἥρμοζον ἀοιδὴν,  
 σεμνὸν ἀπὸ θεῶν κωτίλον ἐπιτυχὼν νόημα.  
 δῆλον ὅτε θεοῖς ἀρεστὸν ἡργάζετο Μοῦσα,  
 Ἑλικῶνι χλόης ἀνθεμον ἀπετίναξα κῶμον·  
 καὶ τότε μέ τις ὕπνου μυχὸς ἡρέθισε φέρεσθαι, 10  
 ὀλίγον ἐπίφοβον φαντασίης ὄναρ τραπῆναι·  
 ὕπνος δέ με λέ(ξ)ας ταχὺν ἀπεκόμισε φί[λον γ]ῆν·  
 ρεῖθροις ἐδόκουν γὰρ ποταμοῦ σῶμα ἀπο[λο]ύειν,  
 ἱκανοῖς ἀπὸ Νίλου γλυκεροῦ ὕδασι προσ[η]νῶς·  
 φῶμην δὲ σεμνήν Μουσῶν Καλλιέπειαν 15  
 Νύμφαις ἅμα πάσαις μέσ(σ)ην κῶμον αἰεῖδεν·  
 Ἑλλάδος τι κἀγὼ βραχὺ λείψανον νομίζων,  
 γραπτὸν ἀπὸ σοφῆς ἔπνευσα ψυχῆς μου νόημα·  
 ῥάβδῳ δέ τις οἶα κατὰ μέλος δέμας δονηθεῖς,  
 ἄρμογὴν μέλει συνεργὸν ἐπεκάλουν χαράττειν, 20  
 ψόγον ἄλλοτρίοις ἤθεσιν ἀπολιπὼν ἄδηλον.  
 ἀρχὴ δέ μ’ ἔκληξεν τὸ σοφὸν ποίημα λέξαι·  
 λαμπρὸς τότε Μάνδουλις ἔβη μέγας ἀπ’ Ὀλύμπου,  
 θέλων βαρβαρικὴν λέξιν ἀπ’ Αἰθιοπῶν,  
 καὶ γλυκερὴν ἔσπευσεν ἐφ’ Ἑλλάδα μοῦσαν αἰεῖσαι, 25  
 λαμπρὰ παρεῖτα φέρων καὶ δεξιὸς Ἰσιδι βαίνων,  
 Ῥωμαίων μεγέθει δόξαν ἀγαλλόμενος,  
 μαντικὰ πυθίδων ἄτε δὴ θεὸς Οὐλύμπιοι·  
 ὥς βίος ἀνθρώποις προορώμενος ἐξέθεν αὐχεῖ,  
 ὥς ἡμαρ καὶ νύξ σε σέβει, ὦραι δ’ ἅμα πᾶσαι, 30  
 καὶ καλέουσί σε Βρεῖθ καὶ Μάνδουλιν συνομαίμους,  
 ἄστρα θεῶν ἐπίσημα κατ’ οὐρανὸν ἀντέλλοντα.  
 καὶ τάδε σοι στείχοντα χαράσσειν μ’ αὐτὸς ἔλεξας  
 καὶ σοφὰ γράμματα πᾶσιν ἄθωπεύτως ἐσορᾶσθαι. 35

[εἵκοσι] καὶ δυὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος.

The section I am interested in here contains chiefly a hymnic eulogy of Mandulis, but it emphasises also the god’s influence on the creation of the poem. What is noteworthy is an analogy between the two parts of the poem in respect of information on its special character and “publication”. I mean the fact that towards the end of each narrative unit the act of inscribing the

21 The text printed here follows Garulli in this volume. Cf. also Bernand 1969: 592–593.

poetic text is referred to (see *χαράττειν*, line 20, and *χαράσσειν*, line 33), and, secondly, that in these two corresponding places the reader's attention is directed to the "cleverness" of the poem (*τὸ σοφὸν πόημα*, line 22, and *σοφὰ φράγματα*, line 34).

Let us theorise on the possibility of extending the range of this correspondence. The first segment was accompanied by the above-mentioned acrostich, consisting of the first letters of the successive lines and hence quite easy to detect.<sup>22</sup> It would be strange (and even against the rules of the inscriptional acrostichs) if the second part of our inscription, equally elaborated as the first one and quite extensive, lacked a similar message incorporated into the text.

This hypothesis seems to be reinforced by the built-in remarks concerning the shape of the inscription. The god asks the poet to inscribe in his honour "these [words, verses, etc.] in marching order" (*τάδε σοι στείχοντα χαράσσειν*, line 33). In my opinion, *στείχοντα* means, in the first place, "line (*στίχος*) by line", with an allusion to the proper distribution of elements (not necessarily single letters) in consecutive lines, but it can also denote motion in any direction. As regards *τάδε*, this strongly deictic pronoun may refer either to the whole inscription or, more probably, to the immediate context, i.e. the second part of the poem. One cannot help the impression that the function of combining these two items of information just here is to suggest that the poetic tricks, although this time more hidden, are still in operation.

Such expectations turn out to be justified, for it is indeed possible to identify another acrostich immediately after line 22, where the first acrostich ends. This second acrostich – so far unnoticed by scholars – comes into sight when we single out not one, but *two* initial letters. It reads (lines 23–9): ΛΑ-ΘΕ-ΚΑ-ΛΑ-ΡΩ-MAN-ΩΣ = λάθε καλὰ ῥωμάνως.<sup>23</sup> The Graeco-Latin gamma-acrostich in lines 27–29:

22 Oddly enough, this obvious initial acrostich was perceived by scholars only in 1895, a year after the publication of the text of the inscription, although, at the end of the inscription (line 36), the inattentive reader is asked to look at the text in a special way: *[εἵκοσι] καὶ δυὸ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι πειθόμενος*, "trusting in twenty-two first letters".

23 The irregularity at line 28 (*μαν*, three letters instead of two) may be explained by adopting the "syllabic" principle within the gamma-acrostich as a separate unit of text. For an acrostich which uses either two or three letters of each line, cf. *IPhilae* 143, the inscription of Catilius, discussed by Garulli and Mairs in this volume. David Petrain (personal communication), referring to Ῥωμάοις in *Monumentum Ancyranum* (13) and forms of the adjective without the *iota* in other inscriptions, suggested that the acrostich might be read as ΡΩ-ΜΑ-ΩΣ, which would solve the problem of the above-mentioned irregularity, but the vicinity of the common form

Ῥω-μαί-ων  
μαίν-  
ως

is a strong argument for the intentional use of the second, unusual term indicating the Roman nationality or citizenship. The close imitation of the Latin form *Romanos* (including its long ending *-ōs* in the accusative plural) must be significant. The author accentuates his knowledge of both Greek and Latin, but the essence of this opposition seems to consist in contrasting two kinds of recipients: those versed in Greek culture and those unable to understand it fully. The transliterated Latin designation may suggest the narrow horizons of the latter, resulting from their ignorance of Greek. Such simple Romans, the poet says, were not able to notice “the beauty” (of the poem), its allusive nature, and its clever construction determined by built-in acrostichs. Pointing to the cultural illiteracy of those *Romani* the poet paraphrases such Iliadic lines as 22.277 λάθε δ’ Ἑκτορα ποιμένα λαῶν (of the deceitful intervention of Pallas Athena “unnoticed by Hector, shepherd of men”) or 16.232 Δία δ’ οὐ λάθε τερπικέραυνον (“nor was he unseen by Zeus whose joy is in thunder”).

It is interesting that at the final line of our inscription the reader is given a routine hint<sup>24</sup> pointing in the direction of the poet’s signature hidden in the first part of the poem (he is advised to be [εἴκοσι] καὶ δυσὶ τοῖς πρώτοις γράμμασι περιθόμενος, “trusting in twenty-two first letters”), but the second acrostich, perhaps purposely, receives no further explanation. A test of perceptiveness?

Not to fail such a test – and knowing that acrostichs usually encompass the whole text of the composition except, at the most, a metatextual instruction at its very end<sup>25</sup> – I suggest that we treat lines 30–34 as a continuation of the word puzzle which begins at line 23. Within this unit, lines 32–34 contain a very apropos syllabic acrostich-telestich TA-ΞΑΣ-ΘAI (= τάξασθαι, “post, station”). But what about lines 30–31? To avoid a gap (which would have no precedent in acrostichs) we should include also their initial letters ΩΣ-KAI = ὥς καὶ. Then, to provide a smooth passage from the “normal” acrostich to the “telestichic” one, the poet seems to have inserted in his hidden message the final syllable -MOYΣ (line 31) and the initial syllable ΑΣ- (line 32), connecting them with the above-mentioned infinitive TA-ΞΑΣ-ΘAI. Thus, the sequence contained in lines 30–34 may read: ὥς καὶ Μούσας τάξασθαι (possibly, with a reference to the

<sup>24</sup> Ῥωμαίων, in my opinion, makes this version less probable here. I think that the author of the inscription purposely Latinised this word.

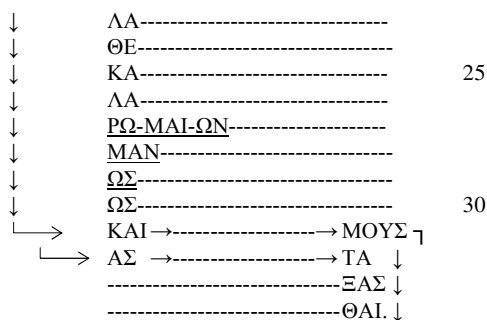
<sup>24</sup> See Rachel Mair’s fine remarks on the “signposting techniques” (this volume).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. another inscription by Maximus (*IMEG* 169), lines 8–12.

Muse/Muses mentioned in both parts of the inscription). It is in these very lines that στείχοντα acquires, additionally, the more general meaning of motion, both vertical and horizontal.

I would venture to take ὥς as expressing consequence (= ὅστε)<sup>26</sup> and translate the phrase: “with the result that they [the Romans] were also/even unable to station the Muses (= to figure out how to follow the track of my poetic art)”. The whole message encoded in lines 23–34 may have the meaning: “The Romans did not notice the inner beauty of my composition, as a consequence of which they failed, among other things, to identify my poetic devices”.

In order to depict the structure and form of the acrostich/telestich encompassing lines 23–34 more clearly, let me present a simplified diagram, reduced to its basic constituents:



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26 Cf. LSJ s.v. III.1.



### 3. On the Lacris Inscription (*CIL* 4.1878)

The contribution by Rebecca R. Benefiel about word-games in the graffiti of Pompeii inspired me to give a closer look at one intriguing inscription (*CIL* 4.1878) which has not been explained since its publication by Zangemeister in 1871. This inscription, announced by its writer as a riddle (*zetema*), has been printed by the above-mentioned editor as follows:<sup>27</sup>

LACRIS · AMALA PATIITO · BIC · ARABICAI  
ENTE

[*Lacris amala pateto bic arabicae | ente.*]

Below these lines on the wall, after a space, another hand inscribed a solution to the riddle: LINGII IIII IINTVLA IIST = *linge mentula(m) est* (= “[the answer] is, lick the prick”). The anonymous person who identified the obscene sense of the inscription considered it to belong, then, among such pornographic advertisements as *Secunda linge Iucundo ment(u)la(m)* 1381,<sup>28</sup> *Veneria Maximo ment(u)la(m) exmuccav(i)t* 1391, *Murtis bene fel(l)as* 2273, *Fortunata fellat* 2259 = 2275 – to quote but a small part of these evidently ubiquitous Pompeian graffiti.

Our inscription fully deserves its classification as a riddle, for it is really enigmatic, especially if one follows the reading proposed by Zangemeister (who himself made use of an earlier apographon by Mommsen). In my interpretation, I will try to keep as close as possible to their proposal. My own reading, after an inspection into the photograph of the text of the inscription,<sup>29</sup> will differ in one point only: based on the similarity of shape between S at the end of the word LACRIS and the letter C in BIC and ARABICAI, I read them all as S. This change allows us not to confine the interpretation exclusively to the troublesome Arabic associations of the reading ARABICAI,<sup>30</sup> which come rather as a surprise in the vast corpus

27 Italicisation marks non-standard letters.

28 Since all the examples quoted by me in the main text of this article come from *CIL* vol. 4 (1871) with Supplements (1909; 1952; 1970), from here onwards I omit the number of the volume and give only the numbers of inscriptions.

29 Kindly made available to me by Rebecca R. Benefiel.

30 The participants of the Warsaw conference ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ will have remembered that I tried to explore this track, creating an erotic image of a chariot drawn by Arabs, with a charioteer standing erect. This interpretation, however, required reading C in BIC as G to achieve the noun *bigae*, and implied an untestified (within the Pompeian prosaic inscriptions) elision of the ending *-ae*. A figurative image of love’s chariot occurs at Varro, *Sat. Men.* 87 Astbury: *properate ... puerae ... | ludere ... et Veneris tenere bigas.*

of the inscriptions we are dealing with here, in which, as far as personal announcements are concerned, there is no other reference of that kind.<sup>31</sup>

Let us examine the inscription in question against the background of similar erotic texts to be found on the walls of Pompeii. The numerous parallels allow us to suppose that they begin as a rule with a nickname of a prostitute, as in the examples mentioned above and in many other cases, cf. Amaryllis/Amarillis 1507 and 1510, Ionis 2042 and 2043, Lahis 1969, Libanis 2038, Mula 8185, Nais 8307, Camudia 8449, Felicula 8711, Secundilla 9228, Valeria 10033a. The name Lacris belongs to the large group of those ending in *-is* (see also Damalis 1507, Doris 1507, Kallis 2085, C(h)aris 2061), but occurs only once in the whole Pompeian corpus. Since it does not appear either in Greek or Latin literature, we may conclude that it was introduced as an *ad hoc* construction. In respect of meaning it is quite ambiguous, as it carries different connotations. As a Greek common noun, it means “ladle”, “stirrer”,<sup>32</sup> which hardly suits a whore. The associations with the Latin *lacrima* seem more likely (Lacris = “Tear-Woman”?), especially when we take into consideration the obscene meaning of this noun (“ejected semen, sperm”).<sup>33</sup> Given the similarity of the first and last letters of the names La(h)is and Lacris, I would not exclude a paronomastic transformation of the former name which, of course, pointed in Pompeii to a much less fortunate person than the most famous Greek courtesan. This local La(h)is appears three times in the Pompeian inscriptions (1578, 1969, 2820).

The main idea of the sentence inscribed is expressed by the phrase AMALA PATIITO. It is this part of the inscription that provoked the above-mentioned answer *linge mentula(m) est*. If so, *pateto* must be the second person imperative and *amala* should have something in common with fellatio. The obscene meaning of *patere* (literally, “to be open”) is attested, among others, in the *Corpus Priapeorum*.<sup>34</sup> I suggest reading *a mala pateto*,<sup>35</sup> “be accessible from (the side of) the mouth”.

What follows this plain (though untypically expressed) order of a potential client is formulated in highly enigmatic, quasi-repetitive style: BIS

31 For the use of the term *Arabicus* in official contexts see e.g. *CIL* 6.954 and 31231.

32 See Hesych. s.v. [λακρὴς καὶ] λάκτις· κώταλις. τορύννη.

33 Cf. Lucil. 307: *at laeva lacrimas muttoni absterget amica* and Adams 1990: 30. Lacris would mean “she who wipes away the penis’ tears”, i.e. *fellatrix*.

34 See 12.13 *qui tanto patet indecens hiatu*, 52.5 *porta te faciet patentiorem*, [Tib.] *Priap.* 83.21–22 *nec tibi tener puer | patebit ullus*, and Mart. 3.72.5 *aut infinito lacerum patet inguen hiatu*.

35 I should like to signal (based on the photograph) that in the inscription there are no clear gaps between any sequences of letters; the division proposed by Mommsen and Zangemeister is rather intuitive.

ARABISAI. In my opinion, to achieve a sense corresponding to the situation involving a transaction, the final three signs should be reinterpreted. I am convinced that they are to be read not as *-ae* (following Mommsen, Zangemeister, Mav<sup>36</sup>), but as *a. II = assibus duobus*, just as in the nearby inscription concerning Lahis (1969): LAHIS | FELAT | A II, and some other instances.<sup>37</sup>

The sequence of letters inscribed between PATIITO and AII (which I read *bis arabis*) with the repeated *bis* and the element *ara* that can stand apart or go with the second *bis* is difficult to understand. If we take *ara* as a separate word, it must have a special (sexual) meaning,<sup>38</sup> and the whole inscription perhaps is to be interpreted as an exhortation containing financial arguments. It could be paraphrased as:

Lais-Lacris, my dear expert in “tears”, be accessible from the mouth. Hotty “altar” offered twice will double your two-*as*-price.<sup>39</sup>

In the interpretation presented above Lacris is treated as the addressee of the whole message. This perspective will be modified if we read *bis arabis* (i.e., linking *ara* with the second *bis*). In such a case, the message becomes bidirectional, the second addressee being a potential client of Lacris. *Bis arabis*, “you will plough twice”, in the erotic context may mean “you will have two fucks”.<sup>40</sup> The idea is perhaps that, during one encounter, you will first enjoy fellatio (Lais-Lacris’ “special offer”, see above, inscription 1969), referred to by the imperative *pateto*, and then still another intercourse, providing, however, that you pay twice as much.

The riddle substantially changes its form if we accept Mav’s reading *\*patetor*<sup>41</sup> instead of *pateto*.<sup>42</sup> Then we obtain the sequence *patetorbis-arabis* (I retain my correction concerning the two Cs proposed by the edi-

36 See *CIL* vol. 4 with *Suppl.* 1909 (Index vocabulorum).

37 *Pieris a II* (5338), *Euclia [ver]na [aeris] a(ssibus) II* (5345), *Sum tua ae(ris) a(ssibus) II* (5372), *Arbuscula a(ssibus) II* (7068), *Mula fella(a)t ... a(eris) a(ssibus) II* (8185).

38 Cf. *Priap.* 73.3–4: *quae tamen exanimis nunc est inutile lignum, | utilis haec, aram si dederitis, erit.*

39 In this context, it is necessary to realise that the charge of two asses for amorous services was very small: it corresponded roughly to the cost of the daily ration of bread or to that of a jug of good wine, or again to two thirds of a pound of lard or half a pound of oil. See Varone 2002: 145–146 with notes referring to inscriptional evidence.

40 Cf. *TLL* s.v. *aro* II: “translate de coeundo”. For a fuller discussion of the topic see Adams 1990, esp. p. 154. Note that this verb seems to appear in another inscription (2104): ..... *arabo hic.*

41 I cannot see the letter R after *pateto* to form *\*patetor*, but there is certainly enough space for it.

42 See *CIL* vol. 4 (*Suppl.* 1909: 762), “Index vocabulorum”, s.v.

tors), which can be divided, for example, into *pate torbis arabis*. The advantage of this reading is that the imperative gets its more frequent form,<sup>43</sup> corresponding to that of *linge*. If *torbis* represented – which is not impossible – a by-form of *turbis*,<sup>44</sup> the first two words of the hypothetical phrase could be rendered “be open to the crowds”.<sup>45</sup> This, besides sounding very rude and contemptuous, brings us back to the problematic, but not quite rejectable, question of Arabic/Arabs. Returning to this track, however, we have to take into consideration exclusively the connotational level of the phrase *torbis arabis*. Arabs were thought to be, among other things, the embodiment of softness, tenderness, and licentiousness,<sup>46</sup> so our inscription, in this version, could be understood:

Lais-Lacris, you expert in “tears”, be accessible as fellatrix to crowds of lewd men  
– for two asses.

Finally, I would like to suggest a solution to the out-of-context ENTE following the inscription discussed above. As Mommsen rightly observed, these four letters probably have been inscribed by another hand. In my opinion, they form a part of an answer preceding the following one – that preserved in full (*linge mentula(m) est*). In other words, below our inscription, put forth as a *zetema*, there have been given not one, but *two* answers. I think they were convergent in respect of sense and, symptomatically, both referred only to the first half of the riddle, i.e. to the expression *a mala pate(to)*. Having inspected the photograph and consulted Zangemeister’s apographon<sup>47</sup> I am inclined to read Mommsen’s ENTE as [P]ENI P[ATE].

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- 43 In the corpus of the Pompeian inscriptions, I have come across only three instances of the future imperative: (*h*)*abeto* 2013, 6865, and *scito* 4287.  
 44 Väänänen (1966: 27) gives two parallel examples: *connus* 1407 for *cunnus* and *obiqe* for *ubiq(u)e*? 2288.  
 45 For the construction *patere alicui* see [Tib.] *Priap.* 83.21–22 (quoted above, n. 34).  
 46 Cf., e.g., *Arabasve molles* (Catull. 11.5); *odores | quos tener e terra divite mittit Arabs* (Tib. 2.2.3–4).  
 47 *CIL* vol. 4, tab. XXVI 8b. There is enough space for the letters now lacking, and both T and E can be taken as variant forms of, respectively, I and P (occurring in some other inscriptions).

# Triple Tipple: Ausonius' *Griphus ternarii numeri*\*

Dunstan Lowe

Drink thrice, or in three threes: that's the mystic law,  
 For triple drinkers or those who make it thrice triple,  
 Linking up the cube in nine odd-numbered threes.  
 Everything follows that law of three, or three threes:  
 The shaping of a man, his full gestation period, 5  
 And his life-span's final end at nine times nine years.  
 Ops bore three brothers, and a set of three sisters,  
 Of the female gender: Vesta, Ceres and Juno.  
 Then there are Jupiter's three-pointed bolts, then  
 Cerberus, then Helen and her brothers in a triple egg. 10  
 The new purple thread wove Nestor three lifetimes  
 And the crow is longer-lived by the same three ages:  
 But, amassing three lives nine times over,  
 Bronze-footed stags beat her by thrice Nestor's three.  
 Yet Phoebus' raven surpasses three of their lives, 15  
 And are trumped ninefold in turn by the ancient fowl  
 Of the Ganges, crowned by rays of a cinnamon halo.<sup>1</sup>  
 Hecate is triple-formed, the maid Diana three-faced:  
 Three Graces, Fates, vocal registers, elements.  
 Three Sirens on the Three-Cornered Isle, triple all ways: 20  
 Three birds, three demigoddesses, three half-girls,  
 Bidden to compete with the thrice-three Muses,  
 They sang, strummed, blew, on pipe, strings, voice.  
 Three philosophical branches; Punic Wars; three-month  
 Seasons of weather in the year; in the dark of night 25  
 Twice three watches. That lazy watchman, who let  
 Mars be caught, gives three loud signals of dawn,

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\* This argument was first presented at the ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ conference and subsequently at the Classics research seminar at the University of Reading in February 2012. It benefited greatly from the responses of both audiences. I am also grateful to Claire Coombe and Michael Williams for valuable comments.

1 Nestor = 3 lifetimes, crow = 9, stag = 36, raven = 108, phoenix = 324.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| And he who was conceived in a tripled night<br>Hung up spoils owed from four times three triumphs.<br>The lyric poets match the number of Mnemonides,                                                                                                                                                                                  | 30 |
| Only three of whom Phoebus once held in his hand:<br>But Cithaeron dedicated thrice as many in bronze,<br>In their traditional piety, not daring to scorn the six.<br>Tarentum's thrice-yearly festival was three nights,<br>Like the triennial at Thebes for twice-born Bacchus.                                                      | 35 |
| The sons of Junius offered to their father's tomb<br>The three first combats of gladiators in three matches.<br>She too, who sought Jocasta's groom in three riddles<br>(What was two-, four- and three-legged all at once?),<br>Menaced Aonia as bird, lion and girl, the tri-form                                                    | 40 |
| Sphinx, bird in wings, beast in feet, girl in face.<br>Three co-regent deities gleam in the Tarpeian temple.<br>A trio of crafts form human dwellings:<br>One lays the stones for walls, one the roof-beams,<br>And one gives the rooftop its final decoration.                                                                        | 45 |
| The Bromian <i>quadrantal</i> and the Sicilian <i>medimnus</i><br>Work the same: one splits by three, the other by six.<br>Physics knows three prime causes: god, matter, form.<br>Creation itself is threefold: father, mother, product.<br>The system of triangles ranges through three types:                                       | 50 |
| Equilateral, isosceles, and scalene.<br>Three parts make the perfect number, so that<br>With a third three added, it divides into three threes.<br>Three is the first number with even, odd and medial,<br>But it alone divides five and seven as well as three,                                                                       | 55 |
| And when put under the centre of the full number<br>It divides the thirds united in a continuous cube,<br>Separating equal, even parts from the uneven threes.<br>Even numbers, too, have three centres, when the<br>Same centre-point of four, six and eight is marked off.                                                           | 60 |
| Three fields of law are decreed by thrice four Tables:<br>Sacred, private, and public which is universal.<br>There is a trio of Interdictions: the "whence by force",<br>The "wherever he were", and the "goods in question".<br>Three ways is freedom given, three ways reduced.                                                      | 65 |
| There are three modes of speech: sublime, restrained,<br>Fine-woven. Medicine too has a threefold discipline,<br>Called Theoretic, Methodical and Empirical.<br>Healthcare is also threefold: maintain, prevent, cure.<br>Oratory has three styles: that of Rhodes, dominated by its<br>Colossus; that which Attic Athens delights in; | 70 |
| And that dragged from theatre to stern courtroom<br>By Asiatic prose, aping choral song in legal hearings.<br>Orpheus' tripods fit three elements: earth, water, fire.<br>Stars have three attributes: distance, appearance,                                                                                                           | 75 |

And measure. Music too, measure's parent, is triple:  
 Sent from the lips, hidden in the stars, heard onstage.  
 Mars' own Rome is threefold: knights, plebs, senate.  
 From *tris* are "tribes", and "tribunes" of the Sacred Hill.  
 Three squadrons of knights, three names for the nobility. 80  
 There are three chords, and three dates in the month.  
 Geryon is triple, triple the composite Chimaera,  
 Scylla is triple, formed of three parts: dog, girl, fish.  
 Gorgons, Harpies and Erinyes form trios,  
 Also the three prophetic Sibyls with a single name, 85  
 Who have three books of fateful verses,  
 Protected by the care of fifteen men.  
 Drink thrice! Three is the greatest number: God is three in one.  
 For this poetic stunt to hit a meaningful number too,  
 Let it have thrice triple tenfold, or ten times ninefold. 90

## 1. Introduction: The Poet and the Poem

The poem which Ausonius wrote in the fourth century AD under the title *Griphus ternarii numeri* or *The Riddle of the Number Three*<sup>2</sup> is one of his stranger experiments. In this article I propose to make it slightly less strange by arguing for a high level of artistic design. The first of my two main arguments is that the preface is an integral part of the poem and the key to its interpretation, revealing its didactic intent as a compilation of classical cultural heritage. The second is that Ausonius' label *griphus* does not mean a riddle in the conventional sense – indeed, only one of four proposed "solutions" is viable – but is instead a metaphor for the poem's intricacy. I will begin by describing Ausonius and the *Griphus* to establish the historical and literary contexts required for interpreting the poem. I will then argue that various elements of the preface and poem which play upon the number three allude to riddling as an intellectual recreation, often in very subtle and indirect ways, belying the poet's own claim that this is a hastily made and disposable work,<sup>3</sup> and establishing a convivial atmosphere between himself, his addressee(s), and the authors of the classical past.

2 Auson. 15 Green. All quotations and citations refer to the text of Green (1991), who regards the title as original, and all translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

3 Ausonius' concern with number may be even more central to his poetics than previously thought. Dräger (2011) has recently argued that the *Moselle* is governed by an extensive sevenfold patterning, involving several lists of seven items and a structural division into units of 7 or 14 or 21 verses.

Ausonius, “*the poet of the fourth century*”,<sup>4</sup> was born about AD 310 to a doctor in Bordeaux and a lifelong career as both scholar and poet. He studied first at Bordeaux, then Toulouse, then became a professor of grammar, and later of rhetoric at Bordeaux. Valentinian invited him to Trier in 364 to tutor his son Gratian. In 368 and 369 Ausonius accompanied both emperor and prince on campaign against the Alamanni. He went on to a series of prestigious appointments, but when his benefactor Gratian was assassinated in 383, he moved back to Bordeaux where he lived comfortably and continued to write copiously. Although little is known of his later life, he probably died around 394.<sup>5</sup> Ausonius is known for his numerous experiments in short-form Latin verse, some of which, including the *Griphus*, are extremely contrived: in Conte’s words, “virtuosity in versification and a complete mastery of language and vocabulary reign supreme”.<sup>6</sup> Ausonius actually coined the term *technopaegnon* (“skilful play”) as the title for a set of his poems,<sup>7</sup> and it might be considered a watchword for his entire output. According to the preface of the *Griphus*, he wrote the poem very rapidly after a drinking party while on a military campaign (probably the one against the Alamanni, though cf. Drinkwater 1999);<sup>8</sup> it then circulated against his wishes, becoming corrupted; and he is now formally offering the original to Symmachus.<sup>9</sup> The *Griphus* was therefore probably written in AD 368, the preface perhaps a year or two later. It may seem a strange experiment to modern or classical tastes, but is typical of Ausonius’ own poetics and indeed those of his age, which reflect the meticulous style of literary criticism practised by contemporary *grammatici*.

The main question this poem has raised for critics has been, what is the solution to the riddle? To put it another way, in what sense is it a “riddle” at all? Its subject, the number three, is as explicit as could be. The final couplet (89–90) is cleverly constructed, but not remotely enigmatic:

For this poetic stunt to hit a meaningful number too,  
Let it have thrice triple tenfold, or ten times ninefold.

4 Hadas 1952: 381, italics original.

5 For a precise biography, see Green 1991: xxiv–xxxii; for a narrative one, see Isbell 1974.

6 Conte 1994: 656.

7 See Luz 2010: xiii–xv.

8 Commenting that members of the imperial entourage were *milites* by default, Green repeatedly asserts that the scene is a dinner party in Trier (1991: 445, 447 *ad loc.*, 518), but *in expeditione* (14) indicates otherwise. We cannot of course treat Ausonius’ own narrative as factual (*pace* Sivan 1992, Drinkwater 1999).

9 Authorial control over how texts entered circulation was a live issue for Ausonius and Symmachus: see Pelttari 2011.



Nor are the learned allusions themselves particularly challenging: an educated contemporary would have found almost everything in the poem “obvious and familiar”.<sup>10</sup> In approaching the difficult question of whether and how the poem is a riddle, it is profitable to begin with the preface, which tells the story of the verses from conception to reception.

## 2. The Preface

The prose introduction to the poem (the only extant Latin discussion of riddle-writing in antiquity besides the much briefer comment at Gellius 12.6) is an integral part of the text, contributing a historical narrative for the poem and a series of literary allusions.<sup>11</sup> The tricolon at the end (*me ut requiras, me ut desideres, de me cogites*) signals its connection with the verses themselves. Ausonius states that the versified list of threes is limited by choice, not by ignorance, and specifies certain things which are omitted:

I knowingly ignore a great many things in threes: the tenses and persons, the genders and degrees of comparison, the nine natural meters together with the trimeters, the entire disciplines of grammar and music and the books of medicine, Hermes Thrice-Greatest and that first lover of Philosophy [Pythagoras], Varro's numbers, and all that is unknown to the common masses (*profanum vulgus*).<sup>12</sup>

This second catalogue overlaps with the contents of the verses themselves, where grammar, music and medicine are all mentioned (albeit briefly); the strange reference to “Orphic tripods” in line 74 may also belong to the Hermetic mysticism indicated here. At the end of the *praeteritio*, Ausonius claims secret knowledge for himself by re-appropriating the *profanum vulgus* of Horace's *Odes* 3.1.1, returning to the same book of poems which inspired the *Griphus*. The verse catalogue itself turns out to be not a partial list of all threes available, but an epitome of them. Its ingenuity consists not in difficulty but in artful density, and the punning imagery of the pref-

10 Green 1991: 445.

11 On the metapoetic richness of prose prefaces in late antiquity and especially Ausonius, see Sivan 1992 and Knight 2006.

12 By commenting that secret, mystic types of knowledge (Hermeticism and Pythagoreanism) are unknown to the *profanum vulgus*, Ausonius implies that this poem contains only broadly accessible content: even his own copy “lay hidden” (*secreta*) while another was “mangled by the reading of the public” (*vulgi lectione lacertatus*). Green (1991 *ad loc.*) takes *lectio* to mean circulation through imperfect copies, but it might also be the profane reading itself. Matthew Nicholls points out to me that the reissue of a poorly circulated text is a literary topos (e.g. *vos quoque, si fas est, confusa pudore repulsae | sumite plebeiae carmina nostra manus*, Ov. Tr. 3.1.81–82).

ace prompts us to reflect on the origin and symbolic power of the word *griphus*.

The similes and metaphors in Ausonius' preface, like the many literary allusions and quotations, profess humility yet display his intellectual credentials. He begins by claiming that someone's proposal of ninefold drinking had afflicted him with an itch that only writing the present poem could "scratch out" (*exsculpere*, punning on the two meanings of "scratch an itch" and "write on paper": cf. Green 1991 *ad loc.*). Though superficially self-deprecating, this image casts the poem as ancient and *recherché*, and also as an impulse transmitted to him from earlier Roman authors – and specifically the Augustan poet Horace – in a convivial setting. Despite giving a recent and vivid dramatic date, Ausonius disingenuously casts the *Griphus* as something of an antique, a worthless relic which he salvaged almost by chance from a mass of crumbling papers (*situ chartei pulveris eruissem*, 3). The same claim that the poem was retrieved from a state of worm-eaten decay appears in the preface to another epistolary poem, *Epistle* 14 Green to Theon (*inventa inter tineas epistula vetere*, a.3–4). The conceit may have been suggested to Ausonius by *Silvae* 4.9, in which Statius jokingly protests at receiving an old, worm-eaten book (*rosam tineis situque putrem*, 10) as a Saturnalian gift.<sup>13</sup> Statius, too, had belittled his own epistolary poem in a prose preface.<sup>14</sup> The verse portions of the *Griphus* and of *Epistle* 14 are thus imagined as ancient yet lively documents, recombining Statius' imagery of crumbling old texts and playful compositions.

The term *griphus* itself is an antiquarianism, reflecting its venerable and *recherché* contents; it originally meant a hunting-net or fishing-basket, and I propose that the bilingual Ausonius knew and played upon this etymology.<sup>15</sup> He calls the poem cheap as "Sicilian baskets" (*geris Siculis*

13 Statius had received the "yawning speeches of old Brutus" (*Bruti senis oscitationes*, *Silv.* 4.9.20), not without their own heavy sociopolitical freight: cf. Newlands 2002: 257–258. Ausonius frequently alludes to Statius' *Silvae*: cf. Green 1977; 1991 *passim*, especially on the *Mosella*.

14 In the preface to *Silvae* 4, Statius calls 4.9 a placeholder for a composition more worthy of the addressee.

15 See Ohlert 1912: 17–22, Luz 2010: 139 with n. 1. For γρίφος as riddle, see e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 20; for γρίφος as fishing-basket, see e.g. Opp. *Hal.* 3.80. On the conventional literary definition of the term, see Luz 2010: 139–146. The "network" or "frame" metaphor is active in Clearchus' discussion of symptotic *griphoi* (fr. 63 Wehrli = Ath. 10.457c–458a: I thank Aurélien Berra for this observation). Plautus' *Rudens* involves a fisherman who nets the riddle which is solved at the resolution of the play (a chest of toys lost at sea): his name is Gripus, "Net/Riddle" (cf. Henderson 2009a: 102). In Dräger's 2011 commentary, which I have not been able to consult directly, Ausonius' *Griphus* is translated as "net" ("Netz": cf. Green 1991: 445).

*vaniora*), a proverbial expression.<sup>16</sup> Sicily, aptly enough, is the three-cornered isle (*Trinacria*, 20), and *gerrae* was another Greek loan-word which, much like γρῖφος, originally meant wicker baskets or screens but had come to mean trifles or nonsense,<sup>17</sup> and thus conceivably a composition like the *Griphus*. At the other end of the preface is a second simile which, when put together with the first, makes a striking claim to wit and ingenuity. Ausonius punningly says that the nature of numbers is not that of *scirpi*, and they should be expected to have knots. "Seeking a knot in a bulrush" was proverbial for "seeking objections where there are none".<sup>18</sup> Since rushes were woven intricately, the word *scirpus* was another archaic word which came to mean "riddle", and was probably a Latin calque of γρῖφος.<sup>19</sup> Meshwork made from osiers and rushes may represent the sympotic exchange of riddles as early as Vergil's *Eclogues*.<sup>20</sup> Ausonius thereby connects his poem with two different proverbial expressions involving wickerwork, reminding the alert reader that he could well have made this poem a riddle in the traditional sense, but instead used it to showcase the texture of a full classical education in the form of many-stranded intricacy.

### 3. The Number Three: Themes and Traditions

As the contents of the *Griphus* plainly show, the number three resonates with various Greek and Roman traditions, ritual and religious, magical and

16 See Fest. p. 83 Lindsay.

17 The meaning of the word *gerrae* is discussed by Sonny 1898. See Fest., *loc. cit.* and cf. *gerro* = "idler" (Ter. *Haut.* 1033), *gerres* = a cheap species of salt-fish (Plin. *HN* 32.148; Mart. 12.32.15; 3.77.7).

18 *Nodum in scirpo quaerere*: Enn. *Sat.* 46 Vahlen ap. Fest. p. 444 Lindsay, Plaut. *Men.* 247, Ter. *An.* 941.

19 *Quae Graeci dicunt aenigmata, hoc genus quidam e nostris veteribus scirpos appellaverunt* (Gell. 12.6.1). This may only mean Varro, whom Gellius had read on the subject of riddles, but may also include earlier sources. Green (1991: 448 *ad loc.*), on the contrary, believes that Ausonius was "probably unaware" that the word *scirpus* could mean riddle.

20 As Corydon renounces pining for Alexis in favour of something more practical he envisages two activities, one of them basket-weaving (*viminibus mollique ... detexere iunco*, 2.72). The other is trimming a leafy vine, which combines the two sympotic symbols of wine and garlands. The image of wickerworking, together with the vine (which is already *semiputata*, 2.70, "half-pruned" or "half-pondered"), foreshadows the exchange of riddles at the end of the subsequent poem (3.104–107; on the difficult solutions to Vergil's riddles, see Putnam 1965 and Dix 1995).

mythological,<sup>21</sup> but Ausonius also uses it more subtly to govern a range of literary allusions. Although hendecasyllables were the traditional metre for sympotic compositions (and that of the Catullus quotation in the preface), the *Griphus* is in hexameters. Ausonius uses hendecasyllables elsewhere, but probably felt it more appropriate here to use the metre divisible by three and six, just as Dante would adopt *terza rima* in his heavily triple-patterned *Divina Commedia*.<sup>22</sup> He may also have chosen it as the didactic metre, since (as I shall argue later) this is a tutor's poem partly conceived as an educational syllabus. Following an older Greek convention, hexameters became in his era the metre of choice for Latin riddles sympotic or otherwise, as shown by Symphosius and his successors.<sup>23</sup>

The later collection of a hundred Latin *Aenigmata* transmitted under the name of Symphosius (perhaps Συμπόσιος, "The Symposiast") contains actual riddles and is thus in a rather different spirit from the *Griphus*, but implies a wider connection between drinking-parties, riddles, and the number three.<sup>24</sup> Its uncertain date, perhaps fourth or fifth century, may be close to that of the *Griphus*. Riddle 27 in Symphosius' collection refers to the nine lifetimes of the crow, an allusion to a fragment of Hesiod (or a later imitation) which features in the *Griphus* and at least once elsewhere in Ausonius' works.<sup>25</sup> The fifteen-line preface claims that the inspiration came during a Saturnalian dinner-party when the conversation fell to the posing of riddles; like Ausonius' own preface, it asks the reader to forgive any signs of haste and drunkenness. The riddles are in hexameters, like the *Griphus*, and each is three lines long. Three of them have "threefold" solu-

21 For relevant surveys, see Usener 1903, Roscher 1907, Tavenner 1916, Lease 1919, Perry 1973, Hansen 1976.

22 The epigrams of the fourteenth book of the *Palatine Anthology*, which contains riddles and oracles, are a mixture of hexameters (especially those in oracular form) and elegiac couplets.

23 Later hexameter collections include the Bern Riddles, each six lines long, and Lorsch Riddles. In their fullest recension the former total sixty-three, the latter twelve. Aldhelm's hexametric *Enigmata* are modelled on Symphosius. In Greek, the Sibylline corpus is hexametric, and Jan Kwapisz reminds me that hexameter is also used for the riddle of the Sphinx in the hypothesis to Eur. *Phoen.* and Eur. *Oed.*, fr. 540a Kannicht (where this is explicitly said to be a hexameter riddle).

24 Although there is scant evidence for "triple" riddles in Greek, Latin authors may have known that the normal procedure of Greek sympotic drinking involved three toasts, the third being for Zeus Soter. The riddle which Gellius quotes from Varro (NA 12.6.2), although neither Greek nor in hexameter, has a "threefold" solution (Terminus) and is three lines long. On Symphosius, see Sebo in this volume.

25 "If Greece tells me the truth" (*si me non Graecia fallit*, Symphos. 27.1; see Hes. fr. 304 Merkelbach-West), cf. Auson. *Ecl.* 22.1–6 Green and *Griphus* 11–17 with Gioseffi 1994.

tions and contain the word *tres* at the beginning of a line.<sup>26</sup> In Ausonius, a high level of formal artistry based on multiples of three is also suggested by the occurrences of numerical words or parts of words, although this is an unorthodox method of interpretation.<sup>27</sup> In any case, the fact that both Symphosius and Ausonius favour the number three in what both authors claim to be riddles composed at drinking-parties may point to a lost mutual source, perhaps in Greek, with a triple theme.

The number three also governs cultural transmission through allusions to specific texts in Ausonius' preface. These are absent from the verses themselves, although several of Ausonius' own "triple" phrases appear elsewhere in his works and may therefore be regarded as self-quotations.<sup>28</sup> In general, Ausonius' writings contain echoes of many poets, his favourites being Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Statius, Lucan, Martial and Juvenal;<sup>29</sup> the reference to "Hermes Thrice Greatest" (*ter maximum Hermen*) recalls an unusual poem by Martial which contains fifteenfold anaphora, a pattern so striking that it must be a parody of hymnic style.<sup>30</sup> The preface also features Plautus, Terence, Catullus and Cicero, and no fewer than three Horatian tags. One of these is from *Odes* 3.19, with its distinctive triple verbal patterning (*ternos ter cyathos*, 14); the others are from poems with significant numbers, *Satires* 1.3 and *Odes* 3.1. The Catullus quotation (which also appears in a poem for Drepanius Pacatus together with Ausonius' self-deprecating rewrite),<sup>31</sup> like the allusions to Horace, is also connected with the number three: it was Catullus' response to Cornelius, who wrote a uni-

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- 26 Symphos. 64 describes a trident, 82 *conditum* (the spiced wine, here apparently with two seasonings, fewer than in any other recorded recipe), and 92 a mother of twins.
- 27 As Ewen Bowie has suggested to me, *ter-ruit* (40) is probably a pun. The string TER occurs 36 times (including 3 x TERNA, 3 x TERGEMIN) and the string TRI occurs 81 times (including 9 x TRIBUS, 9 x TRIA, 15 x TRIPL).
- 28 Parts of line 24 and 81 and a paraphrase of lines 11–17 appear elsewhere in Ausonius' *Eclogues*: 19.29 (*perfidiam vitare monent tria Punica bella*); 4.4 (*haec sunt Romano tantum tria nomina mensi*); 22.1–6 (see n. 25 above). The last line (*ter decies ternos habeat deciesque novenos*, 90) closely resembles *Epist.* 15.7 Green (*vis novies denos dicam deciesque novenos*).
- 29 Green (1977) provides a useful catalogue. Quotations and allusions in Ausonius and the Gallic panegyricists imply "a full-scale revival of early imperial Latin literature" (Cameron 2011: 405).
- 30 See Mart. 5.24 (esp. line 15: *Hermes omnia solus et ter unus*) with Versnel 1974. Despite dubious evidence of Gnostic Hermes-cult in fourth-century Gaul (Philastr. *Haeres.* 10), this explicit and casual allusion rules out a Hermetic solution to the *Griphus*.
- 31 Auson. *Praef. var.* 4.1–6 (including *illepidum rudem libellum* in line 4). This donish joke was apparently well received, since Symmachus throws the word ἀμουςότερος back at *Epist.* 1.14.2.

versal history in three volumes (*tribus ... chartis*, Catull. 1.6).<sup>32</sup> Ausonius' ability to call up and arrange his learning according to the number three apparently extends even to the seemingly casual quotations in the preface.

The *Griphus* is a compendium of the various types of knowledge which Ausonius, as *grammaticus*, was employed to transmit to his imperial student Gratian. It is an ambitious catalogue which ranges exuberantly from one subject area to another, suggesting abundant variety, but associates triples with fundamental aspects of Roman history and culture, particularly those which belonged in the classroom. Grammar is mentioned only in the preface and dialectic is absent, but Ausonius touches on the other five of the Seven Liberal Arts which would later become the *trivium* and *quadrivium*,<sup>33</sup> as well as Roman law, Greek and Roman history, and the mythology which was the idiom of pagan (and much Christian) poetry. Despite some deliberate intermingling of subjects within the poem, broad thematic groupings are discernible. The first twenty lines or so deal with lore and legend, building to an embedded catalogue of triples on the Sirens at 20–23 (in four verses; their rivals the Muses receive four verses at 30–33). Most of the second half is devoted to scientific or historical facts, except for the last nine lines, which return to lore and legend. Ausonius need not be a Pythagorean to share the widespread belief that numerical structure, like the science of etymology (which is itself used at 79), revealed fundamental truths. Although he may not know it, the number three points to early Latin verse as well as religion: at least one Saturnian inscription divides into three-line units,<sup>34</sup> and the *tripudium* danced by Romans in celebration, most famously the Arval Brethren, may even have had its own metrical unit.<sup>35</sup> This poem by Ausonius arguably includes more data per line than any other from antiquity, and he uses poetic licence to include as many examples of ancient learning as possible. He claims that there are three elements (19, 74), although most would say four; he makes Vergil's biform Scylla triform; he says that there are three Sibyls, although no other source gives this number. He also gives the Muses the orthodox number of nine (22, 30–33), whereas in another poem he counts "three or eight".<sup>36</sup> Just as Ovid had sought to retell the entire canon of classical myth

32 I thank Matthew Nicholls for this nice observation.

33 Rhetoric (66–67, 71–73), geometry (50–51), arithmetic (52–60), astronomy (75–76) and music (76–77, 81).

34 Goldberg 1995: 62–63.

35 Tanner 1961.

36 Elements: Green (1991: 450, 455 *ad loc.*) cites Lucr. 5.93, Ov. *Fast.* 5.11, Plin. *HN* 15.108, Oros. *Apol.* 9.5 and Onomacritus ap. Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 3.30 for the number of the elements as three. Scylla: Verg. *Aen.* 6.286. Sibyls: as noted by Green (1991: 456 *ad loc.*), Kurfess (1954) is unconvincing in his claim that in lines 85–87,

using the theme of metamorphosis, Ausonius' aim is to condense a broad scope of classical learning into ninety verses using the number three, and he is happy to adjust or reinterpret the information in order to achieve this.

The mass of triples in the poem may derive in part from Varro, who favoured threefold taxonomies. His lost treatise *De principiis numerorum* is generally presumed to have discussed Pythagorean arithmology, and Ausonius indicates that the number three was its main concern. It is unclear whether Ausonius knew Varro's writings directly,<sup>37</sup> although he was clearly aware of their concern with the number three. Varro's treatise was nine books long,<sup>38</sup> which was probably intentional, given that our knowledge of his other works indicates a definite preference for tripartite divisions.<sup>39</sup> There are also some striking examples in his surviving work: in the three-book *Res rusticae*, animal husbandry (according to Varro's Scrofa) involves 3 x 3 types of animal, with (at least) nine subdivisions each, totalling 81.<sup>40</sup> Part of the conversation beginning at 2.1.1 mentions three topics of animal husbandry (its origin, its dignity, its science) and three historical phases of farming (gathering, pastoralism, and agriculture). Varro's preoccupation with threes and triples dictated the planned (but not

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Ausonius is thinking of the Sibyls of Cumae, Erythraea, and finally Tibur, on the basis of Tib. 2.5.68–71; but at 67–70 Tibullus actually names *four* Sibyls (as in Paus. 10.12, but differently named), including the unidentified *Phoeto Graia* (the widely accepted emendation of MSS *Phoebo grata*). Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.7–12 reports Varro's list of ten, which seems to have prevailed. Muses: *aut tris aut octo sorores* (Auson. *Epist.* 13.64 Green). Earlier sources count three (e.g. Paus. 2.29.2, Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 9.14.3 = *Mor.* 744c, Ephorus ap. Arn. 3.37), eight (Crates ap. Arn. 3.37; Serv. *ad Aen.* 1.8, who also knew a source counting four Muses), and indeed seven (Epicharm. fr. 39 *PCG*; Myrsilus, *FGrH* 477 F 7). Elsewhere Ausonius mentions thirty horses on one vehicle (*Epist.* 14b.18 Green), a preposterous number (Green 1991: 634 *ad loc.*), in order to fit his chosen numerical scheme.

37 Ausonius knew at least some Plautus, Terence, Catullus and Cicero, but most of his source texts are Augustan or later in date. He alludes casually to Varro's *Hebdomades* at *Mos.* 306–307 (*decimo celebrata volumine Marci hebdomas*), but also advertises some knowledge of Ennius and Lucilius, whereas Cameron (2011: 206) suspects that he never encountered these at first hand.

38 Rawson 1985: 162 with n. 30.

39 Many of Varro's works (extant or named in Jerome's catalogue) had numbers of books which are multiples of three: e.g., *De re rustica* = 3, *De scaenicis originibus* = 3, *De actionibus scaenicis* = 3, *De proprietate scriptorum* = 3, *De similitudine verborum* = 3, *Legationum* = 3, *De Pompeio* = 3, *De bibliothecis* = 3, *De poematis* = 3, *Disciplinae* = 9, *De iure civili* = 15, *Hebdomades* = 15, *Saturae Menippeae* = 150. A few earlier and later texts observe the same principle: Ennius' *Annals* = 18 (initially 15); Lucilius' *Satires* = 30; Pliny's *Natural History* = 36 (*HN praef.* 17).

40 *Ea partes habet novem, discretas ter ternas* (Varro, *Rust.* 2.1.12).

the final) structure of *De lingua Latina*.<sup>41</sup> He even recommended that the number of guests at dinner range between the number of Graces and the number of Muses, which is remarkably close to the Horatian toast which inspired the *Griphus*: either three drinks for the Graces, or nine for the Muses.<sup>42</sup> Varro's triple and ninefold taxonomies should be regarded more as a product of dialectic art than of numerological intent, since Plutarch contrives a similar structure in his discussion of the number of the nine Muses.<sup>43</sup> In any case, as Ausonius acknowledges in the preface, his numerological scholarship is at least partly inspired by Rome's most renowned numerological scholar.

The poem is therefore far from a *griphus* in the customary sense of "riddle", although Ausonius can write in that way. He was aware of the connection between numerical verses and riddles;<sup>44</sup> he writes mathematical riddling verses elsewhere, especially in his first three epistolary poems to Theon (*Epistles* 13–15 Green) which may also hint at the imagery of the γρίφος/*scirpus*.<sup>45</sup> Ausonius' number-riddles, which often indicate multiples of three,<sup>46</sup> are always easy and sometimes conclude with an explicit answer, since mathematical verses were primarily a display of skill, for him as for earlier Latin poets.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, the closing couplet of the *Griphus* explicitly states that the whole poem is ninety lines long. The title instead alludes to the dense texture of its literary allusions. Despite his claims that the project was a casual stunt, Ausonius appropriates a recurrent feature,

41 Varro claims that he initially undertook to write six books on the Latin language in two sets of three (*Ling.* 5.1), and later declares again that he will write two triplets of books, now on etymology (8.24.2).

42 Gell. 13.11.1–2.

43 According to Plutarch, there are nine Muses because there are 3 x 3 branches of learning (mathematics = music, arithmetic, geometry; philosophy = logic, ethics, physics; rhetoric = demonstrative, deliberative, judicial): Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 9.14.3 = *Mor.* 744d–e.

44 There were mathematical problems in Hellenistic and later epigrams and oracles, which were sometimes converted into riddles when phrased as a question, as shown in the fourteenth book of the *Palatine Anthology*.

45 The second of three metrically discrete passages in *Epistle* 13 Green (71–81) poses a string of grandiose riddling expressions (*aenigmatum*, 72) describing the writing of poetry on paper. Ausonius mocks Theon for hiding his poetic talent in a reed-roofed hut (*vilis harundineis ... pergula tectis*, 6; cf. *scirpea Dumnitoni tanti est habitatio vati?*, 15.15) and speculates that he may be netting stags, boars and fish. *Epistle* 14 responds to a gift of thirty oysters and contains numerical riddles based on the number three, describing Theon's long absence and distance.

46 E.g. six (Auson. *Epist.* 10.5–24 Green), thirty (14b.24–35), ninety (15.5–14).

47 See especially Manilius' *Astronomica*, books 2–4, but briefer examples are more common (e.g. Ovid's verse expressing 365 days: *is decies senos ter centum et quinque diebus*, *Fast.* 3.163).



and a historically resonant token, of Roman verbal artistry, in the preface as well as the verses.

#### 4. Four Potential "Solutions"

Although postmodern readers might be particularly receptive to the idea of a riddle with no solution,<sup>48</sup> it seems charitable to assume that despite his emphasis on the metaphor behind the word *griphus* Ausonius still meant to imply one, as he does more explicitly in his other riddling poems. Four classes of "solution" to the poem have been offered by critics, and since the most recent is also the most plausible, it will be convenient to evaluate each of these in turn. One finds the key to the poem in the "perfect number" mentioned at line 52; another finds it in Pythagoreanism; a third, in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; and a fourth (introduced in a recent article by Jesús Hernández Lobato) in the prominently absent *tres Augusti*. The first solution is offered by commentators who have focused their attention on the mathematical portion of the poem (52–60), disputing the identity of the *numerus perfectus*. Françon has called it the answer to the riddle, which is unlikely, but has at least settled the debate. The "perfect number" is not three (as according to Tollius and White) or nine (as according to Corpet), but six (as Scaliger, Françon and Green agree).<sup>49</sup> However, these lines lack emphatic position in the poem, and it is far from certain that an educated contemporary would struggle to understand Ausonius' formula for the *numerus perfectus* as much as we do, so this "solution" can be discounted. Scholars following the second view have interpreted the poem as a Pythagorean paean: Conte has called it "full of Pythagorean doctrine".<sup>50</sup> Ausonius does mention the legendary philosopher in the preface as "Philosophy's first lover", and elsewhere in his works refers to the "Pythagorean letter" Y; many manuscripts of the *Idyllia* put the label "Pythagorean" upon *Eclogue* 21 Green (*Est et non*), and some do the same for *Eclogues* 19 (*De ambiguitate eligendae vitae*) and 20 (*De viro bono*).<sup>51</sup> But Ausonius

48 David Petrain has suggested to me that the end of the preface (in which Ausonius expresses a desire to linger in his friend's mind) implies just this, that the *griphus* has no obvious solution and must instead be contemplated for its artistry.

49 Tollius 1671; White 1921: 42–43; Corpet 1842: 139; Scaliger and Vinet 1595 *ad loc.*; Françon 1943; 1951; Green 1991 *ad loc.* The number six is described as the *telios ... numerus* at Auson. *Epist.* 10.19 Green, where it has no particular programmatic weight.

50 Conte 1994: 656.

51 Ternes 1986: 151. The former title may well reflect Pythagorean influence (cf. *Epist.* 21.38–41 Green).

says in the preface that Pythagoras is not included in the poem, and the mentions of Pythagoras in his other texts hardly show him to be an adherent, any more than do those of Diogenes.<sup>52</sup> The third view, that Ausonius dwells on the number three as a Trinitarian, has more adherents and is based on his closing mention of the recently-evolved doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>53</sup> There is no reason to doubt that Ausonius shared the faith of his imperial patrons, as he professes elsewhere,<sup>54</sup> but this is not likely to provide an answer to the “riddle”. His inclusion of the Trinity merely proves that a longstanding patterning device still has currency, bringing the series of triples up to date. He willingly includes numerous pagan allusions, just as his estate at Lucaniacus contained a statue of Bacchus Pantheus which he describes in two epigrams.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the poem is dedicated to Symmachus, famously the last defender of Rome’s pre-Christian state religion, and the tone of the preface (which also states that these verses were not composed for Symmachus at all) precludes evangelistic intent. Decisively, as Hernández Lobato has pointed out, there is ring composition between *ter bibe* in line 1 as the sympotic *mystica lex*, and *ter bibe* in line 88 in the context of the Trinity.<sup>56</sup>

Eschewing the perfect number, Pythagoreanism and Christianity, Hernández Lobato has offered a fourth and most persuasive solution which commutes the poem’s religious references into a form of political patronage. He suggests that the whole poem is a riddling reference to the significantly absent triad of the imperial family, the *tres Augusti* (Valentinian, Valens and Gratian).<sup>57</sup> This gains point from the campaign environment in

52 Ausonius alludes to Pythagoras (*Epist.* 21.38–41 Green), Pythagoreans (*Ecl.* 19.31–32, *Par.* 30.5), and the “Pythagorean letter” Y (*Prof. Burg.* 11.5, *Technop.* 14.9). (There is also a very brief reference to Stoicism and Epicureanism in *Epigr.* 1.6: *Stoicus has partes, has Epicurus amat.*) Diogenes is mentioned briefly at *De herediolo* 12 and is the subject of *Epigr.* 54 and 55. In *Epigr.* 56, the ghost of Croesus mocks the ascetic Diogenes; *Epigr.* 73 mocks the Pythagorean *Euphorbis*.

53 *Tris numerus super omnia, tris deus unus* (Auson. *Griph.* 88). The Trinity is called the “solution” to the riddle by John Henderson (2009b) in a BMCR review of Filosiini 2008. I have not been able to consult Filosiini’s book directly.

54 Auson. *Ephem.* 2.7–10, *Prof. Burd.* 26.13–14, *Vers. Pasch.* (a.k.a. *Domestica* 2); cf. Cameron 2011: 404.

55 Auson. *Epigr.* 32 and 33 with Green 1991 *ad loc.*

56 Green (1991 *ad loc.*) proposes that *mystica* in *Griphus* 1 should not be associated with any deity, Christian or otherwise. Hernández Lobato (2007: 461–462) also compares the *mystica lex* with the use of the term *mystae* in a Christian context at *Vers. Pasch.* 2.

57 The title is attested epigraphically: Hernández Lobato 2007: 459–460. Tertullian had used the same expression in a Christian context, apparently in reference to Severus, Geta and Caracalla (*quantum urbium aut produxit aut auxit aut reddidit praesentis imperii triplex virtus! Deo tot Augustis in unum favente, quot census*

which the preface claims the poem was conceived, an ideologically charged scenario. Hernández Lobato draws attention to the *Versus Paschales*, in which Ausonius first states that the Trinity is to be worshipped, then eulogizes the three *Augusti*, and concludes by comparing the two triple entities and blessing them together.<sup>58</sup> The climactic statement *tris numerus super omnia, tris deus unus* in line 88 could therefore be panegyric instead of – or as well as – religious dogma. This interpretation offers a message of *political* reverence which may unite the two instances of *ter bibe*, one profane, the other Christian. On this plausible reading, Ausonius is indirectly hinting at the divinity of his dynastic patron(s), which makes him a court-poet on the Augustan model.

As a further nuance to this theory, the political message to the youngest of the *tres Augusti* may be connected to the emperor Augustus via the number three. Ausonius' refrain *ter bibe* harks back to that patron of Horace and Vergil, the model for all *Augusti*, who had in his younger days been a soldier-statesman. The only place in classical Roman literature where anyone "drinks thrice", aside from medical contexts involving doses and diets, is in Suetonius' *Caesares*, when Augustus is reported to have limited himself to three drinks "while on campaign at Mutina".<sup>59</sup> It seems quite likely that Suetonius, like most of the contents of the *Griphus*, featured in the syllabus which Ausonius taught to the young emperor Gratian.<sup>60</sup> The political message is therefore not only eulogistic but proreptic: young future emperors on campaign should keep traditional drinking habits. The difference is that Ausonius encourages multiplication, which is quite appropriate now that there are three *Augusti*. This reading of the poem as the work of Gratian's tutor raises the possibility of a further in-joke. Ausonius taught in residence at Trier (Augusta Trevirorum), among the Gaulish people known as Treviri (or Treveri: both spellings of the name are equally well attested).<sup>61</sup> His choice of topic for the poem could there-

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*transcripti, quot populi repurgati, quot ordines illustrati, quot barbari exclusi!* Tertull. *Pall.* 2.7).

- 58 *Vers. Pasch.* 22–31 (in particular, compare *trina fides auctore uno* in line 22 with *trina pietate vigentes* in line 29).
- 59 *Non amplius ter bibere eum solitum super cenam in castris apud Mutinam, Cornelius Nepos tradit* (Suet. *Aug.* 77.1). It may also be relevant that Augustus enjoyed posing riddles with gifts at the Saturnalia (*cilicia et spongias et rutabula et forpices atque alia id genus titulis obscuris et ambiguis*, 75.1).
- 60 Ausonius explicitly used Suetonius' *Caesares* as the basis for his own *Caesares* (Suetonius is named at lines 4 and 69). His pupil Paulinus likewise undertook to versify Suetonius' *De regibus* (Auson. *Epist.* 17.14–32 Green).
- 61 In Ausonius' own hexameter lines about the city (*Ordo* 28–34) he spells Treveri with an E, but line 29 (*Trevericaeque urbis solium*) makes it clear that the first vowel is long, the second short, which explains the alternative spellings.

fore be a pun on the name Treviri, which sounds like “Three-men”.<sup>62</sup> However, as tempting as it is to speculate about the historical context, this takes us beyond the formal characteristics of the text itself, and thus beyond Ausonius’ usual habits. In the other works, especially the *Epistles*, he is all too eager to lay bare both his own ingenuity and any relationships of *amicitia* which he uses it to build. One way or another, it seems, this poem forces readers to turn it into a riddle by creating ingenious solutions.

## 5. Conclusion

Ausonius is quite accurate in calling the *Griphus* wickerwork, but his modesty is pretended, and the preface foregrounds the metaphor underlying the term; its hints at mystical knowledge are not to be taken too literally. Although the poem supports one form of “solution” through an involved historical reading, it is an encoding of Roman culture into a specimen of formalist perfection, rather than a “riddle” in the strict sense. It is a highly complex and ambitious work, intricately crafted from strands of learning across the spectrum of classical learning, whose artistry extends beyond the verses themselves into the imagery and allusions of the preface. Indulging his taste for versifying numbers, Ausonius identified and exaggerated a recurrent and historically resonant feature both of Latin verbal artistry and of classical culture more generally. Together, the preface and the verses become a history of triplefold Latin poetics and classical learning. Ausonius’ composition is both traditional and experimental, and his “drink thrice!” is an invitation to join a sympotic intellectual companionship which unites past and present.

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62 Cf. *tredecim, trecenti, trepondo*. For a pun on *Treviri* and *tresviri*, see Cic. *Fam.* 7.13.2. No trace of Julius Caesar is visible in the poem, despite its authorship by a Gaul who wishes to divide everything into three parts.

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## V. Playful Receptions





# The *Aulularia inversa* of Joannes Burmeister<sup>\*</sup>

Michael Fontaine

*Avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante  
trita solo. iuvat integros accedere fontis...*

Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 1.926–927

This paper announces the rediscovery of a Neo-Latin masterpiece and offers first thoughts on its interpretation. Its author is a German playwright whose name, Jo(h)annes Burmeister, has long been familiar to scholars of Roman comedy. The text is a bizarre adaptation of Plautus' *Aulularia* to a play about events in the biblical Book of Joshua. Printed in Hamburg in 1629, it is the only complete and extant example of a new genre of Latin poetry, a genre that combines Neo-Latin school drama with Protestant *parodia sacra*. The result is an entirely new and fully performable play, but one that closely and constantly echoes Plautus' original like a strange and shadowy dream. It exemplifies Umberto Eco's notion that a text is a machine for generating interpretations, and my finding it was like looking for India, and stumbling on America.

Let me begin by explaining how I got there, and why the new text is of such great interest.

## 1. Mater-Virgo (1621)

In summer 2010 I was looking everywhere for a Neo-Latin adaptation of Plautus' *Amphitryo* ("Amphitryon") by Burmeister called *Mater-Virgo*, "The Virgin Mother". Published in Lüneburg in 1621, it is mentioned in

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\* This paper is a companion piece to M. Fontaine Forthcoming b, on Burmeister's *Mater-Virgo*. M. Fontaine Forthcoming a includes a text and translation of *Aulularia* and the fragments of *Mater-Virgo*. It also supplies references for unsourced statements here about Burmeister's biography, which in the scant modern reference literature is confused or incomplete.

numerous handbooks of Latin literature and scholarly papers about Plautus' play. *Amphitryo* enacts Jupiter's mythical seduction of Alcmene and the consequent birth of Hercules, and by all accounts Burmeister's adaptation of it to a Christian theme about the birth of Jesus is extremely odd. But when I began looking for it, it did not me take long to discover that no one had actually seen the play at first hand in over a century.

It seems that only a single copy of *Mater-Virgo* had reached modern times.<sup>1</sup> It was held in the Royal Library in Berlin, but it went missing in World War 2 and its whereabouts today are unknown (it is not in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow, though many books looted from Berlin did end up there). It so happens, however, that two independent discussions of *Mater-Virgo* were published in 1886 (Günther 1886, Reinhardtstoettner 1886), which together quote just under 100 lines of the Latin text, 150 German verse *argumenta* (plot summaries), a German hymn, and some prefatory matter. This material alone is enough to show that Burmeister was a phenomenally creative poet.

As have other authors at various times, Burmeister had noticed obvious structural parallels between the mythical accounts of Hercules and the canonical accounts of the life of Jesus – namely, the heroes' divine conception, their benefit to mankind, their profound suffering, and their immortality after death. But beyond these general structural parallels, Burmeister shrewdly observed that some *specific* features of Plautus' treatment of the myth parallel the gospel narratives of Jesus' nativity in strange and particular ways. He noticed, for instance, that (1) in Plautus' play the divine conception immediately gives rise to suspicions of Alcmene's infidelity, that (2) Plautus makes use of a star-filled, preternaturally long night to smooth over the nine months from Hercules' conception until his birth, as if they were actually on the same night, that (3) Plautus' play ends with Hercules miraculously crushing two serpents, and (4) that the play concludes with predictions of his glorious destiny.

Burmeister took these parallels as the basis for "converting" Plautus' pagan play. In his *Mater-Virgo*, Jupiter becomes the Holy Spirit, Alcmene Mary, Amphitryon Joseph, and the infant Hercules becomes Jesus. Mercury, who plays a large role in Plautus' play, naturally becomes the angel Gabriel.

Yet these simple equations of role hardly begin to describe what Burmeister actually did. In fact, he tracked Plautus' play in obsessive detail.

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1 In July 2012 Prof. Eckard Lefèvre of Freiburg told me an alleged second copy of *Mater-Virgo* had been reportedly held in a private collection in England some decades ago but had disappeared upon the owner's death. Neither of us has found any further information to confirm or deny the rumor.

Not only did he preserve most of Plautus' words verbatim, and in the same order and meter (to the extent that he understood it). When he did have to change a word, Burmeister would often make an intertextual pun on the word in the original. For example:<sup>2</sup>

Plaut. *Amph.* 97–103 (Mercury speaks)

haec urbs est Thebae. in illisce habitat aedibus  
 Amphitruo, natus Argis ex Argo patre,  
 quicum Alcumena est nupta Electri filia.  
 is nunc Amphitruo praefectu' st legionibus. 100  
 nam cum Telebois bellum est Thebano poplo.  
 is priusquam hinc abiit ipsemet in exercitum,  
 gravidam Alcumenam uxorem fecit suam.  
 [cf. 108, usuramque eius corporis cepit sibi]

This city is Thebes. In that house there (*points*) lives  
 Amphitryon, born in Argos of an Argive father,  
 whose wife is Alcmena, daughter of Electrus.  
 This Amphitryon is now in command of the legions 100  
 because the Theban people are fighting the Teleboians.  
 Before he himself went away to the army,  
 he made his wife Alcmena pregnant.  
 [and he enjoyed her body]<sup>3</sup>

Burmeister's *Mater-Virgo* 97–104 (Gabriel speaks)

haec urbs est Nazareth. in hisce habitat aedibus  
 Maria virgo, nata ex Iehoiakimo patre,  
 Iosephi sponsa fabri de Davidis tribu.  
 is nunc Ioseph profectus est Hierosolymam. 100  
 nam rex Herodes templum strui curat novum:  
 is prius quam hinc abiit a rege conductus ad opus  
 hanc virginem Mariam despondit sibi:  
 sed non usuram cepit eius corporis.

This city is Nazareth. In this house here (*points*) lives  
 Mary, a virgin, the daughter of Joachim  
 and the fiancée of Joseph, a craftsman of the tribe of David.  
 This Joseph has now gone out to Jerusalem, 100  
 for King Herod is having a new temple built.  
 Before he went away to take up work in the king's employ,

2 I have not been able to determine what edition of Plautus Burmeister used (assuming he did use only one). With updated punctuation, I reproduce Plautus' text from Friedrich Taubmann's 1612 edition, which is a likely candidate since Burmeister's *Martial* (see below) boasts a celebratory epigram by Taubmann (1565–1613), and because he, along with J. P. Pareus (also mentioned below, section 6), was the foremost Plautine scholar of his age. In citations of Burmeister's texts below I regularly change capitalizations and idiosyncratic punctuation to more contemporary norms. Translations of Burmeister are my own.

3 Tr. de Melo 2011, modified.

he got engaged to this virgin, Mary,  
but he did not enjoy her body.

As we can see, Burmeister created an original backstory by expanding the gospels and collapsing time. In Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 Joseph is called a *faber* or craftsman, so here he becomes the supervisor of Herod's expansion of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (historically, c. 19 BC). This is why he can be absent from Nazareth long enough for the Holy Spirit to visit Mary and sire Jesus. And beyond this ingenious connection, the language remains eerily reminiscent of Plautus' original. Some word correspondences are partial (e.g. *vobis* ~ *suis*, or *illisce* ~ *hisce*), while others substitute functional equivalents (*Thebae* ~ *Nazareth*, *Alcumena* ~ *Maria*), reconstitute words (*Argo* ~ *virgo*), or even pun on the original (*praefectus* ~ *profectus*). Many other lines are repeated verbatim.

Altogether it is like a game of "spot the difference" – or it would have been, that is, if Burmeister had printed the two texts side by side. In fact he offered his text alone, as a fully performable play.

This is important, because beyond the parasitic relationship with Plautus' play Burmeister creates many links with Latin liturgical drama of the Middle Ages. Characteristically, he himself subtly points this connection out in the full title of his play. The figure on the following page reconstructs the title page of his book from Günther 1886: 58 and Reinhardstoettner 1886: 208 n. 4, who both report the full title of *Mater-Virgo* with vertical strokes to indicate line breaks on the title page (fig. 1).

To readers of classical Latin, the word *misterium* that Reinhardstoettner reports in the title (and preferred here as the *lectio difficilior*) looks like a simple misprint for *mysterium* (= μυστήριον), the *vox propria* in this context; but Burmeister knew that in medieval Latin *misterium* was a separate word – probably a contraction of Latin *ministerium*, "task, office" – that denoted no less than a liturgical play on biblical themes. His pun thus simultaneously suggests Plautus' *comoedia* has been both "converted" (in a confessional sense) to "the mystery of the incarnation" as well as "converted" (in the sense of literary genre) to "a mystery play about the incarnation".

The title page seems to conceal at least two other verbal games. One is found in the enigmatic prose epigraph. Although the Latin itself and the sentiment of the distich are susceptible of several interpretations, its initial letters, I, B, and L, clearly but quietly certify the authorship of *Joannes Burmeister, Lunae-burgius*. The other game is created by the strategically central placement of *BURa*, "plow", in the epigraph five lines below *MIS-TERium* in the title. Framing Burmeister's name, the collocation seems to form a second sphragis guaranteeing authorship.

|                              |                                                             |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| M. A. Plauti                 | The <i>Virgin Mother</i>                                    |
| Renati                       | of M. A. Plautus                                            |
| Sive                         | reborn;                                                     |
| Sacri                        | or rather,                                                  |
| Mater-Virgo                  | sanctified:                                                 |
| Comoedia prima ex Am-        | His first comedy                                            |
| phitruone                    | inverted                                                    |
| ad                           | from <i>Amphitryo</i>                                       |
| Admirandum Con-              | to                                                          |
| ceptionis Et Incar-          | the marvelous mystery                                       |
| nationis Filii Dei           | of the conception and                                       |
| Misterium <sup>4</sup>       | incarnation of the Son                                      |
| inversa.                     | of God                                                      |
| Joan. Burmeistero Lu-        | By                                                          |
| nae-burg. P. L. Caes. Recen- | Joannes Burmeister                                          |
| sente.                       | of Lüneburg, Imperial Poet Laureate                         |
| Ignobilis Bura Lucratur      | <i>The peasant earns his living by the plow;</i>            |
| Invidia Bucca Lacrumatur.    | <i>A teardrop rolls down Envy's cheek. (?)</i> <sup>5</sup> |
| Luneburgae                   | Lüneburg                                                    |
| Excudebat Andreas Michaelis  | Andreas Michaelis's Press                                   |
| M. DC. XXI                   | 1621                                                        |

Fig. 1: Reconstruction of the title page of Burmeister's *Mater-Virgo*

Who *was* this man? Since Burmeister is even less known today than he was in his own time, it is worth pausing here to add some information about him.

## 2. Burmeister's Life and Preliminary Plautine Inversions

The son of one Albert and Elise (née Wolf) Burmeister, of whom nothing is known, Joannes Burmeister of Lüneburg (1576–1638) was crowned an Imperial Poet Laureate of the Holy Roman Empire in Jena on July 15, 1600, by the Count Palatine Nikolaus von Reusner (1545–1602). Thenceforth he invariably styled himself *Joannes Burmeister, Lunae-burgius (-icus, -ensis)*, *p. l. c.* (= *Poeta Laureatus Caesareus*).

<sup>4</sup> *Misterium* Reinhardtstoettner : *Mysterium* Günther and Heyse 1854: 138 (§2117).

<sup>5</sup> Or perhaps "one's cheek weeps for envy", if *invidia* is ablative rather than nominative.

Unlike most Latin poets of the time, Burmeister was not a schoolmaster but a Lutheran priest by profession. He spent the vast majority of his ecclesiastical and literary career, from 1603–1628, as pastor of Gülzow, a sleepy village in Schleswig-Holstein. In 1594 he studied at Rostock University and in 1601 he became deacon in Lauenburg an der Elbe, where in 1628 he returned as General Superintendent and Pastor. From 1635 until his death in 1638 he was Provost of Uelzen.<sup>6</sup> He thus spent his life almost entirely in these towns in or near Lower Saxony, all less than 30 miles from Hamburg. The only notable disturbance in this seemingly quiet life took place in 1628, when harassment by (probably) Croatian troops under the command of Count Tilly during the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) forced him to flee Gülzow for Hamburg. As I discuss below, it is during the year he spent there in refuge that he wrote *Aulularia*.

It is important to stress that Burmeister was himself not primarily a *dramatist* or man of the theater, like Plautus himself, but rather a *Latinist* turning to drama from previous experience in other fields. Moreover, he was a Latinist whose chief interests were in form and Christian theology. That makes his Plautine plays quite different from the more famous Neo-Latin dramas of Georgius Macropedius (1487–1558), the Jesuit Jacob Bidermann (1578–1627), and above all the “Christian-Terentian” comedies of the more famous Cornelius Schonaeus (1540–1611), which are original dramas that merely borrow the general style of Terence.

In fact, Burmeister’s first major publication was quite different. Planned while he was still a student at Rostock, in 1612 he published in Goslar three volumes of *parodiae sacrae* of Martial’s epigrams (Burmeister 1612). Impressive as they are, these epigrams are a fairly conventional example of Neo-Latin *parodia sacra*, a genre that suddenly burst into flower among Protestant writers in Germany from c. 1600–1620 and just as suddenly died out.<sup>7</sup> This genre has nothing to do with the medieval “sacred parody” made so famous by Bakhtin; rather, the basic idea of a Neo-Latin “sacred parody” was to produce a punning contrafactum of a classical text on a Christian theme. Source texts were typically short (e.g. Horace’s odes, Catullus, Martial), and the result was not necessarily meant to be “satiri-

6 On a visit to Lüneburg, Gülzow, and Uelzen in April 2011 I failed to locate his gravestone in either the respective churches or the municipal cemeteries. The church custodian in Uelzen thought Burmeister might be buried in the crypt, but she did not have a key to access it and my subsequent communications to the adjacent canonry (*Propstei*) there have gone unanswered.

7 Niehl 2006 and Robert 2006 are fundamental introductions to Protestant Neo-Latin *parodia sacra*. The best overview of Burmeister’s *Martial* is still Reinhardtstoettner 1887, though in ignorance of the genre to which it belongs, it inevitably overvalues the originality of Burmeister’s achievement.

cal”, i.e. funny, in the modern sense of the word parody. In this case the word simply served to indicate the parasitic relationship the second poem bore to the first.

Burmeister’s next major work was a massive *Saturnalia Christiana* (Burmeister 1619). Composed in conscious imitation of the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius (fifth century) and the *Saturnales sermones* of Justus Lipsius (1547–1606, published 1585), his “Christian Saturnalia” presents an imaginary dialogue among Lutheran theologians on miscellaneous topics.

Two years later saw the publication of *Mater-Virgo*, marking the onset of what could be called Burmeister’s decade-long “Plautine turn”. In the preface to *Mater-Virgo* Burmeister announces that he has already been at work inverting Plautus’ *Casina* to a play he calls *Susanna*. This was apparently never published, but in 1625 Burmeister did publish an *inversio* of Plautus’ ribald *Asinaria*, “The Jackass Affair”, that adapted a biblical story found in 1 Samuel 18:25–27. According to that passage, King Saul agrees to betroth his daughter to David, but only in exchange for a dowry of 100 Philistine foreskins. Remarkably enough, David, far from daunted, actually *doubles* the request and brings Saul the foreskins of 200 Philistines. Unfortunately, the only writer ever to record having seen this book is the German bibliographer Johann Albert Fabricius (1668–1736). He once owned a copy, but upon his death it was sold in 1738 to an unknown buyer and has not been seen since. The auction catalog preserves its truncated title, *Asinaria ad regum Israëli historiam inversa*, “The *Asinaria*, inverted to the story of the Kings of Israel” (Lüneburg, 1625, octavo). The title alone is the only “fragment” of this incredible play to survive.

In the case of *Mater-Virgo* and the *Asinaria* we know that at least *somebody* once read them. The same cannot be said of the subject of my paper proper – Burmeister’s *Aulularia*.

### 3. *Aulularia* (1629): External

In scouring the Internet in summer 2010 for traces of *Mater-Virgo* I hit on a mention of an *Aulularia* by Burmeister. That was exciting because I knew that scholars had never heard of this text before – there is, literally, not a single mention of the book in any printed source whatsoever.

*Aulularia* is held in a single copy in the Copenhagen Royal library (shelfmark 176:1, 32 00090). The library acquired it from an unknown source no later than the early nineteenth century, and until I drew their attention to it, they had misleadingly catalogued it under the name “Joan Burmeister”. (In my edition of the play, I call this copy *Hafniensis*.)

Finding the book and contextualizing its contents has been equal parts puzzle and detective story, a story whose details can be told another time. Let us instead have a look at the text itself.

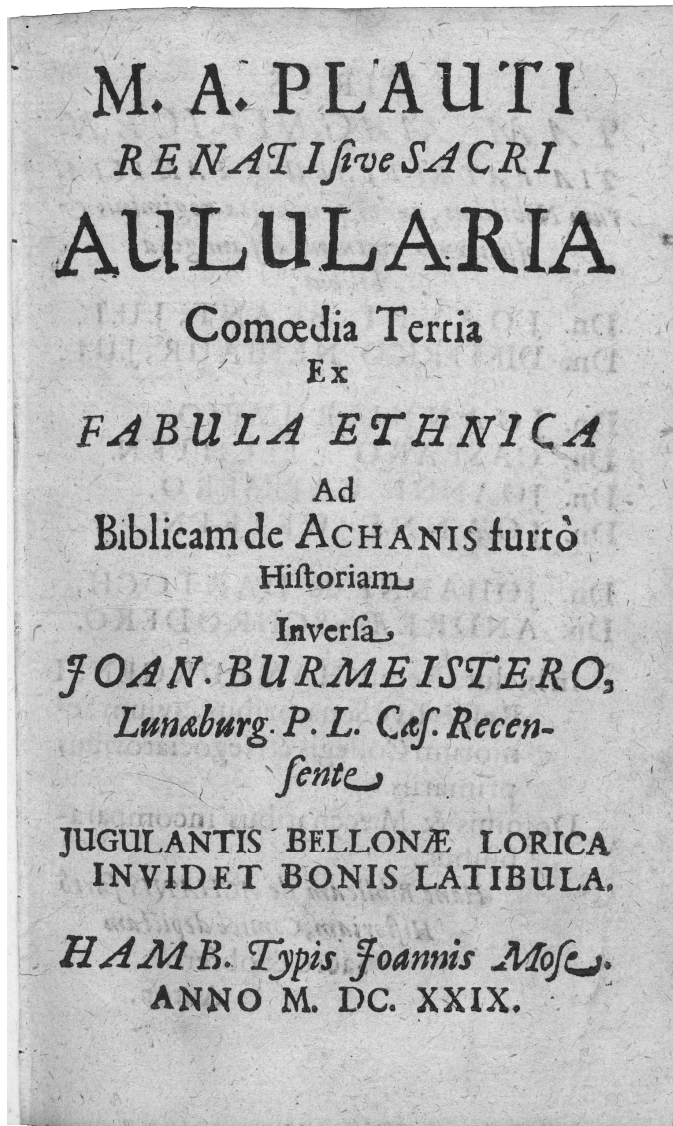


Fig. 2: Cover page of the *Aulularia*



Published in Hamburg in 1629, the book is a small, cheaply printed octavo of 64 + vii pages. The full title is *M. A. Plauti renati sive sacri Aulularia, comoedia tertia ex fabula ethnica ad Biblicam de Achanis furto historiam inversa*, “The *Aulularia* of Marcus Accius Plautus reborn – or rather, sanctified. His third comedy, inverted from a heathen play to the Biblical story of Achan’s Theft”. Below that is his name and below that, a two-line epigraph, *Jugulantis Bellonae lorica | invidet bonis latibula*, “Murderous Bellona’s cuirass | refuses all refuge to the good”, whose initials, as in the epigraphs in *Mater-Virgo* (and, as it happens, the *Saturnalia*), playfully seal the authorship of *Joannes Burmeister, Lunae-burgius*. See fig. 2.

After this follows a brief dedication to the elders of Hamburg and a short preface about the historical circumstances in which Burmeister wrote. Then come two Latin *argumenta* adapted from Plautus, the Latin text of *Aulularia (inversa)*, two intercalary scenes of Burmeister’s own devising, and finally six German-language *argumenta* to the play in rhyming iambic quatrains. Burmeister gives neither an introduction to the contents of his play nor any independent stage directions. Apart from the *dramatis personae*, absolutely everything must be deduced from the text itself. All of the interpretations that follow are thus my own, and it should go without saying that different readers may react differently to them.

In the preface Burmeister declares his intention in composing his play (f. A4):

Plautum cupio suffurari denatum ethnicum, ut restituam renatum Christianum.

Non ut scholis explodam Plauti ethnicam Latinitatem, sed ut illi coniungam entheam pietatem. Qui labor, ante me quod sciam, non est tentatus a quopiam. ...

[Relinquo hanc Plautinam comoediam] eo iuventuti Hamburgensi profuturam, ut habeat imitationem Plautinae Latinitatis in exercitio Christianae pietatis. Quam si scholae vestrae alumnis utilem agnoscetis, meam hac in re praestitam operam non despicietis.

I want to steal away Plautus, who died a heathen, so that I may bring him back, reborn, as a Christian.

My intention is not to bowdlerize Plautus’ heathenly Latin for school use, but to wed heavenly piety to it. To my knowledge, no one has attempted this sort of effort before.

[I leave you this Plautine comedy] for the benefit of the youth of Hamburg, so that they will have an imitation of Plautine Latin in the exercise of Christian piety. If you will deem it useful to the students in your school, you will not reject my efforts in it.

The school alluded to here is the Hamburg Johanneum, and while the poor quality of the printing and the paper are indeed consistent with school use, it would be absurd to suppose that Burmeister nursed no greater ambitions for his work than this.

Apart from the obvious pun on *ethnicam* ~ *entheam*, a striking feature of the preface is the continuous rhyme scheme and pervasive isometry, whether real or specious, of the prose (*Latinitatem* ~ *pietatem*; *sciam* ~ *quopiam*; *Latinitatis* ~ *pietatis*; *agnoscetis* ~ *despicietis*). This is no accident. Medieval rhetoricians called this the “Isidorian style”, a complicated form of rhyming stress-accented prose characterized by clauses of seemingly equal length. The style had once been cultivated by medieval scholastics in the belief that it could stir feelings of piety or joy (John of Garland [fl. 13th cent.] says that *iste stilus valde motivus est ad pietatem vel ad leticiam*, Lawler 1974: 106). But Renaissance writers looked upon it with horror, and by Burmeister’s time it had been long obsolete. Yet quite possibly *because* in its less restrained forms it engenders automatic puns, in his typically virtuoso way Burmeister uses it constantly in his prose writings (the entirety of his *Saturnalia* is written in it).<sup>8</sup>

In the preface Burmeister explains that he composed the play during a year of refuge (f. A3–A4):

...quod nata est [sc. *Aulularia*] sub illarum [sc. vestrae magnificentiae et eminentiae] praesidio, dum ante annum ob Bellonae cruentae flagellum quaerere cogebar exsilii asylum.

**A4** Quod ad tempus Hamburgi et | Bargerdorpi apud viros aliquot laudatos et munificos praeter spem inveni. ...

Ne autem ingratus ex hospitio discedam, relinquo meis hospitibus et asyli Domini hanc Plautinam comoediam, ut gratae mentis tesseram, in feriis [*M. Fontaine* : inferiis *Hafniensis*] insperatis demandati officii, tunc a Bellona suspensi, compositam [eo iuventuti etc. in the above quote continues here].

...because it was born under that generous protection of yours, when bloody Bellona’s scourge was forcing me to seek asylum the year before.

And just when I needed it, I unexpectedly found it, among some admirable and generous gentlemen in Hamburg and Bergedorf....

Not wanting to depart their company without saying thank you, however, as a token of my gratitude I am leaving my hosts and the patrons of my shelter this Plautine comedy, composed during an unexpected vacation from my official duties<sup>9</sup>, which Bellona had then put on hold.

Burmeister then bids his patrons farewell. He offers no further clues to help us interpret his play. Unlike the *Martial* parodies, *Aulularia* does not present a facing text of Plautus’ original. Unlike the *Mater-Virgo*, it boasts no encomiastic epigrams at the front. We simply get a cast of characters, the reworked Plautine *argumenta*, and then the play begins.

<sup>8</sup> Polheim (1925: 432–435) illustrates the Isidorian style, J. Fontaine (1960) discusses its evolution.

<sup>9</sup> Reading in *feriis* for *inferiis*, which, however, is possibly also a sardonic pun meaning “composed thanks to the unexpected death-gift of my official duties...”. By “official” Burmeister means his pastoral responsibilities at Gülzow.

What follows is a fascinating romp through a world seemingly showing Bronze-Age Israel. Yet his masterful manipulation of Latin words and the different objects, technologies, or institutions to which they referred in classical Latin and his own time, allows him to warp the dramatic illusion in strange ways. In some cases he seems clearly to allude to or even comment on ongoing events of his day. In various ways and with deliberate anachronisms, for example, he evokes both the unprecedented military depredations of the 30 Years War (which was fought on a policy of *bellum se ipsum alet*) and the recent onslaught of witch burnings in Germany in the late 1620s (to which Friedrich Spee's *Cautio criminalis* of 1631 sought to halt).

But these historical propositions will all have to be explored, defended, and discussed on another occasion; since our focus here is on the Μοῦσα παίζουσα, after summarizing the contents of Burmeister's play I will focus instead on his use of wordplay.

#### 4. *Aulularia*: The Contents

Plautus' *Aulularia*, "The Pot of Gold Affair" – the original was perhaps by Menander – recounts the foibles of Euclio, an impoverished Greek miser who has discovered a pot of gold and wishes to keep it secret. His story intersects with that of Lyconides, a young man who has raped Euclio's daughter and gotten her pregnant, and that of Megadorus, a much older man who has come to seek the daughter's hand. Though the ending is lost, it has always been among Plautus' most popular plays. It is onto this text that Burmeister layers the biblical characters drawn from the Book of Joshua. Since he presupposes familiarity with its contents, I summarize them here.

After entering the Promised Land, the Israelites sack the city of Jericho and put its inhabitants to the sword. They spare only a prostitute named Rahab and the members of her household, since prior to the sack Rahab had willingly concealed spies sent by Joshua to scout out her city's defenses. Upon sacking the city Joshua consecrates Jericho's wealth to God and, under the Jewish principle of *cherem*, declares the treasure off-limits. The Israelites then turn to capture the neighboring city of Ai, but are defeated in battle. When lots are cast, they reveal that a soldier, an Israelite named Achan, had secretly stolen some of Jericho's forbidden treasure and thereby incurred God's displeasure. The Israelites thereupon stone Achan and his entire household to death, a scene vividly depicted in a famous engraving by the French artist Gustave Doré (1832–1883) (reproduced here as fig. 3).



Fig. 3: *The Stoning of Achan*. From Doré's English Bible (1866)

The execution of Achan causes God to look upon the Israelites favorably once more, and upon a second attempt they succeed in capturing Ai.

In the interim, Rahab has been welcomed into the Israelite camp. In an interesting split, in postbiblical Jewish tradition Rahab goes on to marry Joshua himself, while in Christian tradition she marries an Israelite named Salmon and eventually becomes an ancestor of Jesus.

Burmeister's *Aulularia* begins in the heady hours between the success at Jericho and the defeat at Ai, and the scene is laid on a street with several tents on it. The originally separate stories of Achan and Rahab have been entwined. Achan is here an impoverished arms broker (*proxeneta*). To bring in a bit of extra money, he has taken in Rahab and her handmaid, a woman named Zilpah, as lodgers. Before the play begins, he has already stolen the treasure from Jericho and concealed it in his tent.

Salmon, a prince of Judah, comes to court Rahab. She is initially unwilling to marry him, but when Joshua eventually comes and prevails on her to consent to marriage and assimilate to Israelite life, her decision causes Achan to panic that his theft will be discovered.

Two of the spies that Rahab had concealed, here named Caleb and Shaphat, provide broad comic relief.

When, later in the play, the Battle of Ai is fought and lost, Achan's theft is doubly detected: both by lot, and also by the watchful eye of Ammiel, Salmon's slave.

At the end of act 4 Achan confesses his crime and is executed offstage.

For the lacunose fifth act, Burmeister silently reworks two Renaissance supplements. The action is quite a surprise; Ammiel finds a (or perhaps *the?*) pot of gold in the ashes of Achan's villa. Rahab informs Salmon that she has secretly brought it with her from Jericho, and presents it to him as a dowry; the play ends with their wedding.

After the play follow two stunning intercalary scenes of Burmeister's own devising. In the superbly comical first one, Shaphat reveals his prior career as a thief. In the second, which strikes a somber tone, Shaphat and Caleb debate the justice of Achan's execution. Both scenes are an astonishing technical feat, because they can be read as *either* perfectly scanned Plautine verse *or* as rhymed, stress-accented prose in the medieval Isidorian style – but not both at the same time. Burmeister forces an interesting choice upon us.

The driving force for the play is Mammon, god of wealth. In a prologue he claims to have caused Achan to steal the treasure.

The characters and their equivalents in Plautus' play can be crudely summarized as follows.



steal the treasure. I did it so that  
 I might make the race of Israel guilty of sacrilege:  
 and this will surely bring great destruction upon each and every one of them.  
 Blame will fall upon Rahab, who enticed her host, 35  
 Achan, to do it, at her advising.

The conniving Mammon, his presence in the ruins of Jericho, and the treasure to which he refers – these elements are entirely Burmeister's own, and, as with Asmodeus in *Mater-Virgo*, the charismatic demon owes a greater debt to medieval literature than to classical comedy. Yet readers who compare Plautus' lines with these will nevertheless see that much of the language is identical.

Still, because they concern plot points, Mammon's language is less closely parasitic and evocative of Plautus' play than in other places. A randomly drawn sample gives a much better impression of the whole. In the extract printed below, for example, Burmeister converts Plautus' crude banter between a slave and two cooks to a scene in which Caleb and Shaphat debate Salmon's decision to marry a foreigner. Because in it Burmeister also includes marginal references to the Book of Joshua, I first reproduce the relevant lines he cites from the Vulgate and I add the Douay-Rheims translation:

2:3 misitque rex Jericho ad Rahab, dicens: educ viros, qui venerunt ad te, et ingressi sunt domum tuam: exploratores quippe sunt, et omnem terram considerare venerunt.

And the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying: Bring forth the men that came to thee, and are entered into thy house: for they are spies, and are come to view all the land.

2:6 ipsa autem fecit ascendere viros in solarium domus suae, operuitque eos stipula lini, quae ibi erat.

But she made the men go up to the top of her house, and covered them with the stalks of flax, which was there.

2:15 demisit ergo eos per funem de fenestra: domus enim eius haerebat muro.

Then she let them down with a cord out of a window: for her house joined close to the wall.

Plaut. *Aul.* 297–308

*Strobilus, a slave; Anthrax, Congrio (two cooks)*

S. pumex non aequae est aridus atque hic est senex.

C. ain' tandem ita esse ut dicis? S. tute existima.

quin divum atque hominum clamat continuo fidem

suam rem periisse seque eradicarier;

300

de suo tigillo fumus si qua exit foras.

quin cum ita dormitum, follem obstringit ob gulam.

C. cur? S. ne quid animae forte amittat dormiens.

C. etiamne obturat inferiorem gutturem

tum, ne quid animae forte amittat dormiens? 305  
 S. haec te mihi, sicut tibi me aequum est, credere.  
 C. imo equidem credo. S. at scin' etiam quo modo?  
 aquam hercle plorat, cum lavat, profundere.  
 S. A pumice stone is not as dry as this old fellow.  
 C. (*incredulously*) Oh, really now? Is that a fact? S. Judge for yourself.  
 Why, I tell you he begins bawling for heaven and earth to witness  
 that he's bankrupt, gone to everlasting smash, 300  
 the moment a puff of smoke from his beggarly fire manages to get out of his  
 house.  
 Why, when he goes to bed he strings a bag over his jaws.  
 C. What for? S. So as not to chance losing any breath when he's asleep.  
 C. Oh yes! And he puts a stopper on his lower windpipe, doesn't he,  
 so as not to chance losing any breath while he's asleep? 305  
 S. (*ingeniously*) You should believe me, just as I should believe you.  
 C. (*hurriedly*) Oh, no, no! I do believe, of course! S. But listen to this, will you?  
 Upon my word, after he takes a bath it just breaks him all up to throw away  
 the water.<sup>10</sup>

Burmeister's *Aulularia* 292–303  
*Ammiel (a slave), Shaphat, Caleb (the two spies)*  
 A. non virgo Israelis aequae atque haec proba est fide.  
 S. ain' tandem ita esse ut dicis? A. tute existuma.  
 C. quin immo. divum atque hominum clamabo fidem  
 rem Israelis periisse nosque eradicarier, 295  
 de suo tigillo si haec nos trusisset foras,  
 cum nos quaesitum obstringebat rex nuntios. Ios. 2:3  
 S. scio. ne hostis nobis animam eriperet insequens,  
 operuit lino nos sub tecti culmine. Ios. 2:6  
 tum, ne quis perderet nostrum animam dormiens, 300  
 persuasit nobis vitam funi credere. Ios. 2:15<sup>11</sup>  
 A. immo equidem credo. S. at scin' etiam quomodo?  
 vitam hercle fune, quoi nos credit, faenerat.  
 Am. No Israelite maiden is as loyal and true as she is.  
 Sh. (*incredulously*) Oh, really now? Is that a fact? Am. Judge for yourself –  
 Ca. (*interrupting Shaphat*) No, let me. I'll call upon heaven and earth to witness  
 that the state of Israel would have been destroyed, and us annihilated, 295  
 if this woman had forced us out of her house  
 when the king was deputizing informants to look for us.  
 Sh. Absolutely. And to make sure the enemy in pursuit wouldn't kill us,  
 she covered us with flax under the roof of her house.  
 Then, so that none of us would lose our lives while asleep, 300

<sup>10</sup> Tr. Nixon 1916, modified.

<sup>11</sup> In the Copenhagen copy of the book the reference to Ios. 2:3 is printed next to line 296 and that to Ios. 2:15 next to line 300. I have moved each down one line, where the citations more appropriately belong.



she convinced us to entrust our salvation to a rope.

Am. Oh, no, no, I trust you. SH. But listen to this, will you?

By god, our lifeline was a line of credit: she charges interest.

What had been a series of bawdy jokes in Plautus becomes in Burmeister a semiserious debate about trust in tribal societies. It includes an extended joke on two meanings of *fides* (word of honor, line of credit), set in motion by *proba fide* in line 292 and *credere* (believe, entrust, lend money).

Moreover, the bawdiest joke (304–305Plaut. = 300–301B) has been replaced with material that is biblical not only in content, but in language as well. And this material offers us a glimpse of Burmeister’s inspiration at work: *funus*, “rope”, in his text comes from Joshua 2:15, but it also captures *fumus*, “smoke”, in Plautus’ 301. *Operuit*, “concealed”, in 299 comes from Joshua 2:6, but simultaneously evokes *obturat* in Plautus’ 304, while *sub* in the same line semantically replicates *inferiorem*. Perhaps most ingenious are the “intertextual” puns on *animam amittere* (303 and 305Plaut.), reanalyzed as *animam perdere* (300B), and *obstringere* (“string over”, 302Plaut. = “deputize”, 297B).

## 5. Puns and Other Ambiguities

These “intertextual” puns are not the only kind of wordplay we find in Burmeister’s *Aulularia*. The author also augments his play with some puns that seem quintessentially Plautine, but that cannot actually be found anywhere in Plautus. And in keeping with the theme of the Μοῦσα παίζουσα, it seems worthwhile to focus our attention on these.

Earlier in the play, for instance, Achan returns home to find Caleb and Shaphat in his house, where they have come to collect arms for the looming battle. Terrified that his theft is being discovered, the broker watches the two spies leaving his house. From a distance he overhears Caleb telling Shaphat (385–386):

fer galeam auratam ad aulam nostri principis,  
aeratam, si volt, capiat Achan.

Bring the golden helmet to our leader’s court.

Achan can take the bronze one if he wants.

At this Achan cries out in terror (386–387):

hei mihi  
perii hercle<sup>12</sup>! aurum rapitur, aula quaeritur.

12 Like many Neo-Latin authors in his day, Burmeister makes no effort to avoid “stylistic paganism” (*ethnicismus styli*: see Helander 2004: 75–80); hence here and often in *Aulularia* characters exclaim *pol*, *edepol*, *hercle*, and so on.

Oh no, oh God no!

I'm ruined! They're taking my gold! They're after my pot!

Eavesdropping from a distance, Achan misinterprets *auratam ... aulam*, "gilded ... court", as "pot of gold". This play on *aula* (a nativized borrowing of Greek αὐλή) and Latin *aula* (= *olla*) is a very characteristic type of pun in Plautus, one that reveals a Freudian dimension of guilt – except that it is not actually to be found anywhere in Plautus' *Aulularia* itself.

In line 819 Ammiel tells his master, Salmon, that he has found boundless riches "in Achan's villa" (*in Achanis villa*), "after he was burned". Salmon snaps back (820), "You dared to pilfer ashes from the fire (*igni favilla*)?" This illogical response suggests he has misheard *in villa*, "in the villa", as *igni favilla*, "(from the) fire, ash" (in classical Latin probably, and in ecclesiastical Latin certainly, *igni* sounds not dissimilar to *in* [*igni* = *iji*]).

These examples and others like them are humorous, but a different example stands out for its deft preparation, its ingenuity, and its startling theological implications. To see it requires a bit of preliminary discussion.

One remarkable quality of Burmeister's *Aulularia* is that the dramatic illusion can be analyzed from two perspectives, the Christian and the Jewish. Even though much of the language comes straight from Plautus, in keeping with the general dramatic illusion, a number of words bear characteristically Jewish resonances (e.g. *lex*, "law", in 640 and 791, and thus *illexit*, "lured", suggesting *inlex*, "lawbreaker", in 736). At the same time, many other words seem especially Christian. Prominent here are references to a cross (929 and 961, and even *discipulas cruci*, 59) and the language in which Achan confesses his sin to Joshua in 731–806 (including *fateor*, *peccare*, *culpa*, *animus*, *ignoscere*, *benedicere*). Also relevant is a line such as 71, in which Zilpah exclaims, "Goodness gracious, what delusions the Jews have got in their heads!" (*nescio pol, an Apellas intemperiae tenent*). As Zilpah is a refugee of Jericho and as her host, Achan, seems exceedingly paranoid, her exclamation perfectly suits the context (as she goes on to explain). But in light of later Christian anti-Semitism, her self-contained, end-stopped, and thus quotable line takes on a peculiar irony.

Some words, such as *benedicere* or *fides*, can be interpreted as either Christian or Jewish simultaneously. For a Christian, the *summus pontifex* mentioned in line 86 is the pope; for Jews it is the *kohen gadol*.

Yet to one interpreting the play from the Christian perspective, it is very odd to note that while Rahab and Salmon are ancestors of Jesus (Matthew 1:5), absolutely no allusion to his future birth appears in the play.

Moreover, when one works out on paper the various entrances and exits of the characters, it emerges – very subtly – that Joshua and Eunomia, Salmon's mother, are represented as both living in the Israelite palace. No

In fact there is only a single line in the whole play that would necessarily be interpreted as “Christian” rather than Jewish. At 936 the slave Ammiel enters, bringing the pot filled with gold that he found in the ashes of Achan’s tent. He shows it to his master, Salmon, who cries out with joy upon discovering the tremendous quantity of money inside. He summons Rahab, Joshua, and Eunomia, and when they have all entered Rahab in turn sees and recognizes the treasure. Now it is her turn to cry out in elation at her good fortune, exclaiming (945–951):

945

13 Cf. Anderson 1972 *ad loc.*

oh quam laetis tuam Iehova gratiam  
 complectar hymnis et grato praeconio,  
 benedicam ei cordis mei subspiriis. 950  
 o spes, o cor! luctum depulverans meum.

O Yahweh almighty, o God triune! 945  
 You do sometimes chasten your servant; but you don't withhold your aid!  
 At last you're pitying me, calling on you constantly, and you're rescuing me.  
 Oh! Yahweh, I will accept your grace with  
 happy hymns and proclamations of gratitude!  
 I will bless it with my heart's sighs. 950  
 My hopes, my heart! cleansing my grief.

Rahab's exclamation in 945 marks the climax of the play. It is the peripeteia in which she discovers her good fortune, and her happiness is shared by all of the people standing around. She had been the harlot of Jericho; she has now been welcomed into the tribe, but until this moment, on the cusp of her wedding to Salmon, she has been living in a liminal state, lodging with Achan. Even her betrothal was uncertain because she thought she had no appropriate dowry to give. Now she is to join the Israelites and become one of them.

But how then can we explain her word *trinunus*, "three-in-one, triune"? In the Hebrew context of the play, it seems to be an utterly anachronistic but unambiguous declaration of the *Christian* notion of God's trinity. This suggests that Rahab is (anachronistically) converting to Christianity.

Yet given that in Christian tradition Rahab goes on to become an ancestor of Jesus, it is extremely surprising that nothing else in the play at all is unambiguously Christian. This could support a Jewish interpretation of the play, and indeed *trinunus* can be accommodated to this view. The adjective was a very fresh word in Burmeister's times. According to Eskhult (2007: 236–237), the adjective "was coined by post-Reformation Lutheran dogmaticians" in the 1620s and as the most suitable rendering of *Elohim* (because of its inherent plurality).

Burmeister seems to devise still another use of the word, however, that suggests we need not decide between these stark alternatives. That is because, alongside the basic meaning "three", there is in Latin in general and in Plautus in particular a special use of *tri-* (rather, Greek τρι-) that grammarians call "elative" or intensifying. In these cases the prefix does *not* mean literally "three" but rather "super, very, *über*".<sup>14</sup> Burmeister must have been aware of it, because apart from the title of Plautus' *Trinummus*, which means "*Über-coin*",<sup>15</sup> two examples of it are found in *Aulularia*

14 See Kessissoglu 1982.

15 See M. Fontaine 2010: 141 n. 84.

itself: *trivenefica* (i.e. τρι-venefica) “über-witch”, in line 86 and in 628, *non fur, sed trifur* (i.e. τρι-fur) “You’re no thief – you’re an über-thief”.

In light of this elative usage we might well interpret Rahab’s exclamation not as Christian but as Jewish – and, specifically the consummately Jewish prayer known as the *Shema* (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל). That prayer consists of the declaration *Shema Yisra’el YHWH Eloheinu YHWH Echad*, “Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is One!” (Vulgate: *Audi Israel, Dominus Deus noster, Dominus unus est* – in both cases *Dominus* is merely the Jewish euphemism for *Iehova*.) Jesus himself says this is the holiest prayer in Judaism (Mark 12:29–30), because it expresses the essentially and characteristically *monotheistic* belief of Judaism.

On this interpretation the seemingly Christian word *trinunus* takes on the meaning “super-one, very one, one and only, unique”, and thus becomes a way of rendering the Hebrew word *Echad*, “(only) one, unique” – a word that can imply “unity in diversity”, i.e. a united whole made of several parts; so that in converting to Christianity Rahab is actually and *simultaneously* making a conversion to Judaism by proclaiming god as *Echad* in front of the Israelites, and thus instantiating the *Shema* in “real time”.

Rahab is, in other words, making use of this single word, *trinune*, placed at this specific time, to unite (1) a characteristically *Plautine* prefix with (2) a *Christian* Neo-Latin word of recent coinage and (3) a *Hebrew* context to produce a word simultaneously interpretable as either (a) a prophetic anticipation of the Christian Messiah in his eternal glory by his ancestor, or (b) a devout conversion and welcoming into the Jewish faith of a Canaanite woman. This may be the most perfect Latin wordplay of all time.<sup>16</sup>

## 6. Other Playful Elements

Let me close with just one of the many oddities and seemingly deliberate inconsistencies in the play that I hope to discuss at a later time. It too involves wordplay.

<sup>16</sup> It is also completely in keeping with Burmeister’s generally philo-Semitic attitude. Quite unlike Luther himself, whose scathing attack *On the Jews and Their Lies* (Wittenberg, 1543) had been reprinted by Lutherans and Calvinists alike as recently as 1617, Burmeister manifests a remarkably charitable attitude toward Jews. His *Martial* features a poem in which he explicitly states that Christian and Jew alike will be saved (8.63 = vol. 2, 133).

The Baroque aesthetic delights in exuberant punning on proper names. Anagrams and facetious etymologies are often the focus of celebratory epigrams we find at the front of books printed at this time.<sup>17</sup> Thus an epigram in Burmeister's *Martial* by Bartholomaeus Bilow (1573–1615) deems him *vere nitens musa orbis*, "The truly shining muse of the world" (an anagram of *Joannes Burmeisterus*), while another facetiously etymologizes *Burmeister* as *Purus Magister*, as if the name were really *Purmeister*, "pure teacher" (German *pur* = Latin *purus*).

In this light it may be significant that the Hebrew word *pur* (פּוּר) = Latin *sors*, "lot", as Esther 9:24 points out (...*phur quod nostra lingua vertitur in sortem*, "...Phur, that is, the lot"). The plural of *pur* is *purim*, the name of the famous Jewish holiday discussed in a chapter of Burmeister's *Saturnalia* (pp. 158–160) and celebrated in a poem in his *Martial* (vol. 2, 201, reworking Esther 9:24–28).

This makes it possible that a reader might pseudo-etymologize Burmeister's name as a blend of Hebrew/German *Purmeister*, quasi *sortis magister*, "master of the lot", i.e. Achan's fatal lot, to which reference is made several times in the course of the play.

This is, of course, speculative; but it gains in relevance after we have finished the play and turn the book over to reflect on its epigraph once more. Recall that it reads *Jugulantis Bellonae lorica | invidet bonis latibula*, which I earlier translated "Murderous Bellona's cuirass | refuses all refuge to the good". But what exactly does it refer to?

Burmeister's preface may supply a clue. It is signed Lauenburg an der Elbe – and thus not Gülzow, where he had long lived – December 3, 1628. In it Burmeister explains that he wrote the play when he unexpectedly found asylum in Hamburg the year before.

On a first reading we might assume that in the epigraph Burmeister is bitterly referring to himself, so that *latibula* = *asylum*. But after finishing the play we now notice that we could reanalyze *bonis* as the dative not of *boni*, "good men", but of *bona*, "possessions, property", and thus refer *latibula* to *latebrae*, which is one word used in the play to designate the hiding place for Achan's precious pot of treasure.

Is Burmeister Achan in some respect? I will have to pursue this notion elsewhere, especially as it will be objected that it speculates on the reception of Burmeister's *Aulularia*. That is a fair point. An epigram celebrating *Mater-Virgo* by Paulus Blocius of Salzwedel (1560–1639), rector of the Johanneum school in Lüneburg, was reprinted by Johann Philipp Pareus (1576–1643?) in his third, *absolutissima* 1641 edition of Plautus. Such recognition might suggest that Burmeister's Plautine efforts were widely

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17 Cf. Milewska-Ważbińska in this volume.

known and appreciated, but as I have emphasized in this paper, the reality is far otherwise. In fact Burmeister's fame was mostly local, his works, then as now, all but unknown. Unlike *Mater-Virgo* or even his *Martial*, his *Aulularia* has no celebratory epigrams at the front, and indeed no known reception to speak of at all – until now. The door is now open to your suggestions.

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# Waste of Time or Artistic Expression? Notes on *poesis artificiosa* of the Modern Era

Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska

## 1. General Aspects

In the modern era the development of forms belonging to what is called by literary theorists *poesis artificiosa* was influenced by several factors. One of them was a tradition that continued almost ceaselessly since antiquity and that became reinforced in the Middle Ages. Turning anew *ad fontes*, the humanists became fascinated with exquisite forms of various linguistic games, viewed at that period as a marginal part of the very broadly understood *ars rhetorica* that included the Greek visual forms (*technopaegnia*) and riddles (*aenigmata*).<sup>1</sup> During the Renaissance interest in visual literary forms was sparked also by emblematics and the advent of iconology. Various experiments concerned with the way a text was written down were also affected in the modern era by the development of mathematics, especially combinatorics, which can be observed in the legacy of Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz.

The various ways in which modern authors refer to the output of ancient and medieval authors of pattern poetry while assimilating their patterns, have repeatedly been of interest to such scholars as Giovanni Pozzi, Ulrich Ernst, Dick Higgins, Elizabeth Cook, and Piotr Rypson in Poland. The following work is merely an attempt at synthesizing the issue and showing the paths taken by the modern authors of Latin pattern poetry, broadly understood so as to include also various poetic *jeux de mots*; I focus especially on what is particular for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

To begin with, it is worth mentioning that in the Renaissance there emerges, next to the literary practices connected with patterns, theoretical thought. For instance, Francesco Robortello, when describing epigrammat-

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1 Cook 2006: 48.

ic poems in his *Poetics*, lists acrostics over which, as he says, *multi nostrae aetatis homines laborarunt* (Robortello 1548: 40), but he himself is not interested in them. A very clear polarization in the judgment of pattern poetry by literary theorists can already be observed in the sixteenth century. Julius Caesar Scaliger in the second book of his *Poetics* publishes a poem in the shape of a small egg which could be, according to him, a nightingale egg, clearly in imitation of Simias of Rhodes' *Egg*,<sup>2</sup> and a poem in the shape of a big egg, which could be that of a swan (Scaliger 1561: 69). He deems them to be worthy examples of poetic endeavors. Scaliger lingers for a bit longer on other kinds of *poesis artificiosa* (*serpentinum, cancrinum, versus correlativi, concordantes, intercalares*; Scaliger 1561: 73–74). According to him, echo is *facetum genus, quod frigide Graeci, Latini acutius exercuere* (Scaliger 1561: 170). Scaliger was also deeply interested in riddles. He briefly mentions them in chapter 57 of the first book of his *Poetics* (Scaliger 1561: 54), but he was one of the most prolific Renaissance authors of Latin riddles (*plurima fecimus nos*, as he says in the just quoted passage of the *Poetics*), often bawdy, based mostly on puns. It is worth noting that literary riddles as a form of entertainment gained extreme popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> The authors of the modern era found their basic model in the compilation of one hundred riddles written in three-verse hexameters by Symphosius and published about a dozen times in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in various editions.<sup>4</sup> An Italian humanist Lilio Giraldi devoted a separate work entitled *Libellus, in quo aenigmata pleraque antiquorum explicantur* to Greek and Latin riddles (Giraldi 1539). Another enthusiast of poetic games, the Silesian lawyer, diplomat and poet Nicholas Reusner, published an anthology of riddles entitled *Aenigmatographia sive sylloge aenigmatum et griphorum convivalium* (Reusner 1599).<sup>5</sup> In this volume he included enigmas of many more recent authors, such as Angelo Poliziano or Joachim Camerarius. The latter participated in the discussion concerning enigma as a figure of thought and was interested in prophecies in the form of enigmas,<sup>6</sup> although he was very severe in his assessment of pattern poetry. Indeed, Camerarius found visual poems to be *non adeo digna res*.<sup>7</sup> In the same vein, a great thinker of the sixteenth century, Michel de Mon-

2 On the model, see Pappas in this volume.

3 Isewijn and Sacré 1998: 123–124. Cf. Dziechcińska 1981: 146.

4 Blauner 1967: 52–53. On Symphosius, see Sebo in this volume.

5 Cf. Tupper 1903.

6 Cf. Cook 2006: 50. On enigmatic oracles, see Beerden and Naerebout and Maurizio in this volume.

7 See Rypson 2002: 53.

taigne, called the Greek pattern poems “trifling and vain subtleties” (Montaigne 1965: 311). Generally, however, *poesis artificiosa* did not arouse too much interest in the Renaissance humanists. Both in the above mentioned, though scarce, theoretical pronouncements and in literary practices, such poems seem to have been treated as a kind of novelty whose main function was to provide literary amusement and entertainment.<sup>8</sup>

Returning to the visual forms, it needs to be mentioned that the term used for them in the modern era – *technopaegnia* – refers to Ausonius’ *Technopaegnon*, a collection of poems in which each verse ends with a monosyllabic word. Later the meaning of the term was broadened to include Greek visual poetry, which could suggest, according to Rypson (2002: 70), that ancient poems might have served the Renaissance authors as a direct model. Thus, their creation of visual forms would constitute a conscious reference to tradition. E.g., a volume of pattern poetry of Janus Tyrigeles compiled by Mikołaj Lubomirski and published in Cracow in 1598 was entitled *Technopaegnon sacropoeticum*.<sup>9</sup>

More volumes with pattern poetry appeared all around Europe in the seventeenth century. Scholars link this phenomenon with the growing network of schools following the curriculum initiated by Johannes Sturm in the gymnasium of Strasbourg. In the same century, a similar model was observed in Protestant gymnasiums and Jesuit colleges alike. Assigned memory and focus-training exercises were supposed to facilitate the practical learning of classical languages, especially Latin. The composition of *poesis artificiosa* was thought to be an excellent ingredient of this *ars memorativa*. According to Seraina Plotke (2009: 203), these practices were linked with the need to create, memorize, and put to practical use rhetorical concepts. The verbal-visual structures may have been used as a kind of virtual map that charted the skills students were expected to learn.

To be educated in arts was to have the ticket to the *res publica litterarum*. The similar formation of authors and readers of *poesis artificiosa*, shaped by the skills they acquired in school, allowed them to easily encipher and decipher the encrypted messages. Not only the creator but also his audience were versed in the art of creating poetry and aware of the conventions of the message. Thus, in these circles it was not so much a secret knowledge as a means of cultural and social communication.<sup>10</sup> The recipient of the message had to know and accept the rules of the game – otherwise he was unable to decipher it. No wonder an example of *poesis artificiosa* can be found within the editorial frame of an academic thesis. Marcin

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8 Rypson 2002: 70.

9 Rypson 2002: 70.

10 Cf. Dziechcińska 1987: 98.

Wadowski in his *Quaestio de hypostasi aeternae foelicitatis*, which was published in Cracow, includes a chronogram (i.e. a poem in which letters corresponding to Roman numerals encode a date) combined with the day named for the public discussion of the thesis (Wadowski 1617: f. A1r):

DoCtoruM numerVm qVando VadovIvs ornat:  
BIs denos vernans MARTIVS egit equos.

The brochure ends with an epigram whose title is an anagram of the Latin version of Wadowski's first and last name (Wadowski 1617: f. B1v):<sup>11</sup>

MARTINVS VADOVITA  
Anagrammatismus:  
VIRTUTI, DO VOTA AMANS.  
Si commune bonum specto, privata recedant  
Commoda, sum MATRIS fidus alumnus ego.  
Artis AMANS; DO VIRTUTI mea VOTA sacratae,  
Doctores doctos docta Academia amat.

Similar forms were also created in other academic communities: e.g., a few volumes of acrostics and anagrams came out of the printing house in Zamosć.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, *poesis artificiosa* appears to be an intellectual game which requires active involvement of the reader. The Polish scholar Hanna Dziechcińska (1981: 145) sees this active reception as, in a way, a type of creation. Solving a riddle, decrypting a date encrypted in a chronogram, discovering an acrostic or a palindrome in a text – all this provided entertainment and at the same time satisfaction and a feeling of belonging to the elite. Approval or disapproval of *poesis artificiosa* was naturally also connected with the individual tastes of teachers and students and with the specialization of schools. For instance, the Jesuit college in the Czech Olomouc was flooded with the Poles who during three royal elections (those of Henry of Valois, Stephen Bathory and Sigismund III Vasa) had sided with the Habsburgs; they formed a local scholarly community that excelled in the literary techniques of *poesis artificiosa* and must have influenced the young people studying there. (It needs to be remembered that *poesis artificiosa* was happily cultivated in the Habsburg court circles up until the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup>)

On the other hand, what needs to be stressed is the relationship between the proliferation of *poesis artificiosa* and an upbringing in the spirit

11 Apart from the anagrams of Wadowski's name, the word MATRIS is capitalized in print, probably because its letters are included in the name *Martinus*.

12 See e.g. Jakub Lang's *Acrostichis votiva* (1644) and *Acrostichis gratulatoria* (1646), for which cf. Estreicher 1906: 57.

13 Klecker 2008: 245–261.

of the Christian religion. Analyzing and interpreting *poesis artificiosa* was often supposed to teach students to commune with God. Conveying religious messages through the means of verbal and visual structures became a way of overcoming the inadequacy of human language to convey God's greatness.

The ubiquitous interest in *poesis artificiosa* in the seventeenth century was also boosted by the preoccupation with symbol and metaphor that dominated this period. This poetry was especially admired by the authors of "occasional" literature.<sup>14</sup> Their works were usually meant to be viewed and contemplated repeatedly and collectively during various ceremonies of both public and private, religious and secular character.

## 2. *Poesis artificiosa* in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

Certain kinds of *poesis artificiosa* created in Poland date back to the Middle Ages, but for the authors of the early and proper Renaissance they were of little interest. However, among the works of the bishop and poet Andrzej Krzycki (1482–1537) one can find an acrostic with his name in the epigram *Ad lectorem* which precedes the *Epithalamion* written on the occasion of the wedding of the Polish king Sigismund I with Bona Sforza (Krzycki [s. a.]: f. A1v). Acrostics also appear among the poems of Grzegorz of Sambor (c. 1523–1573), professor of the Cracow Academy. Stanisław Niegoszewski, the well educated secretary and poet of King Sigismund III Vasa and a true European, was famous for the *poesis artificiosa* he composed to be included in the copperplate representing Venice's coat of arms. This visual and verbal composition preceded the second volume of the works of Cicero dedicated to the Polish chancellor Jan Zamoyski and published by Aldus Manutius. This work, aside from a grid poem and an acrostic, includes two palindrome verses (Niegoszewski [1584?]: f. A1r):

Si bene te trades, sedes, sed arte tenebis,  
Et si se retro feret, utere forte, resiste.

Among the literary games of the greatest poet of the Polish Renaissance, Jan Kochanowski, we can find *versus cancrini*, i.e. a sort of palindromic poem which has two contrary meanings depending on whether it is read normally or backwards, and acrostics as well as Latin riddles (*gryphus*). He was also the author of a *carmen macaronicum*: *De eligendo vitae genere* (Kochanowski 1590: f. B3r). This poetic genre was born in the humanistic

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14 Plotke 2009: 17–19.

Padua, and one of its best known representatives was Teofilo Folengo. The point of this type of writing was to combine Latin words with Latinized forms from one's native language. These were supposed to provide scholarly entertainment to the reader. To the same end Kochanowski composed a Latin ode in the Asclepiadic meter, included in his *Lyricorum libellus* (Kochanowski 1580), which was dedicated to an elderly vixen who, dumped by other lovers, was now pursuing the poet.

*Poesis artificiosa* found a much greater admirer in Kochanowski's peer, Andrzej Trzeciecki, a poet linked to Protestant circles. Among his Latin poems we find chronograms, tautograms (i.e., poems in which every word begins with the same letter) and acrostics. The following poem that includes six acrostics encrypting the name of the Polish king Henry of Valois consists of eight hexameters (Trzeciecki 1958: 428):

|            |             |           |          |          |          |
|------------|-------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Horror     | Hyperboreis | Henricus  | Hic      | Hostibus | Heros    |
| Excellens  | Erit        | Exornabit | Et       | Evehet   | Eius     |
| Nobilitate | Nova        | Numen     | Nunc     | Nobile   | Nomen    |
| Rex        | Regimen     | Rectum    | Russorum | Rege     | Ruente   |
| Inclitus   | Imperia     | Incipiet  | Iove     | Iusta    | Iuvante  |
| Christum   | Corde       | Colet     | Christo  | Curante  | Coronae  |
| Victrici   | Vt          | Vigeat    | Valesia  | Vivida   | Virtus   |
| Sauromatum | Semper      | Se        | Sorte    | Sequente | Secunda. |

The very existence of such poems in the literary circulation of the sixteenth century was, according to the Polish scholar Teresa Michałowska (1990: 635), "one of the signals of the emerging interest in various pattern techniques".

Towards the end of that century the aforementioned Jesuit college in Olomouc became an important center for teaching the composition of *poesis artificiosa*. Polish students and teachers were an important part of this institution. Mikołaj Lubomirski, known for his books containing *poesis artificiosa*, also studied there. His compilation *Hymenaeus, vel carmen nuptiale* (Lubomirski 1598), published on the occasion of the marriage of Prince Janusz Ostrogski to Katarzyna Lubomirska, contains visual poems in the shape of a tree (fig. 1), a chalice and rings, as well as acrostics, *can-crinum* and a permutation poem (in which words can be variously rearranged) entitled *Optatianum*, which refers to one of the poems of Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius.

In his volume *Sertum academicum sive corona laurea* (Lubomirski 1599), dedicated to Krzysztof Rottendorf, Lubomirski included a cryptographic poem, anagrams and chronograms. And in his panegyric that is a tribute to the Cracow bishop Piotr Tylicki we find a sort of poetic rebus.<sup>15</sup>

15 See Rypson 2002: 68.



lished in 1593 and included in *Encyklopedia staropolska* (*The Old Polish Encyclopedia*) by Zygmunt Gloger (1903: 148). This poem consists of fifteen hexameters composed as a tribute to the Polish king Sigismund III Vasa. It is exceptional for its author's creativity and the meticulousness with which the pictures are produced (fig. 2). It is worth mentioning that it was at the college in Olomouc that the first deeper theoretical reflections on *poesis artificiosa* took place.<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 2: The poetic rebus *Poema hieroglyphicum* by Jakub Krasicki.  
In Gloger 1903: 148.

<http://www.sbc.org.pl/publication/7359> (accessed August 2012)

<sup>16</sup> Rypson 2002: 67.



Another prolific poet of this time who created original poetry books containing pattern panegyrics was the Polish Jesuit, preacher and mathematician Wawrzyniec Susliga. His collection of poems written upon Franciszek Łącki's episcopal anointment was published in 1598 (Susliga 1598: f. B3v). Visual poems in the shape of the episcopal insignia can be found there (fig. 3).

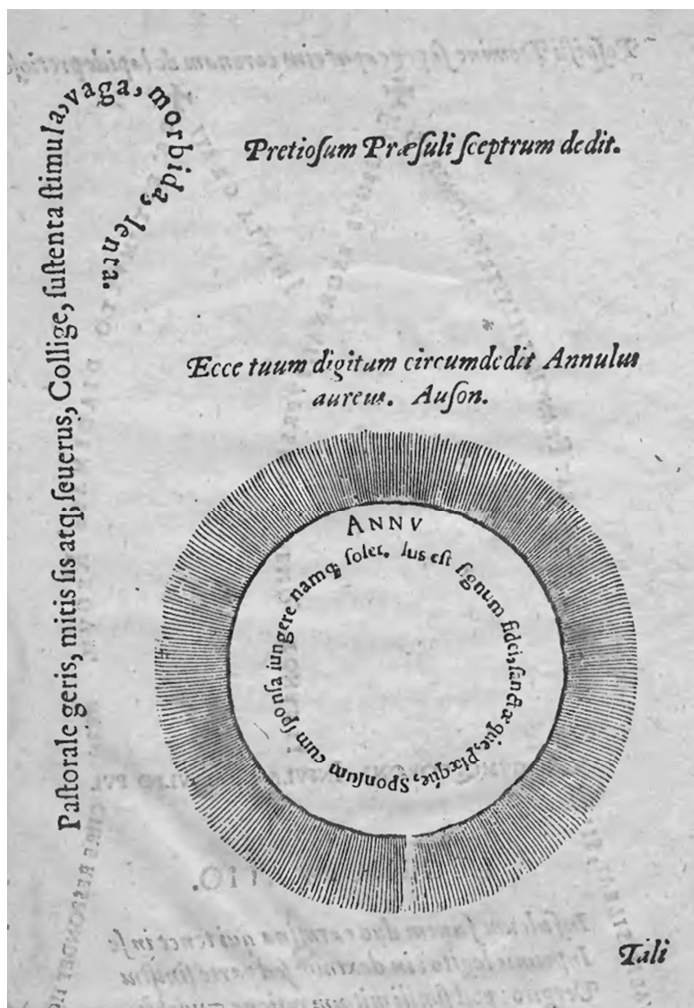


Fig. 3: A poem in the shape of the episcopal insignia. In Susliga 1598: f. B3v.  
<http://www.dbc.wroc.pl/publication/4693> (accessed August 2012)

However, it was not until 1600 that a substantial interest in pattern poetry became noticeable in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the same time, new types of such poetry appeared. These forms were carefully classified and described by Piotr Rypson (2002). Besides acrostics, popular in Poland since the Middle Ages, and riddles, which came into vogue during the Renaissance, now grid, linear and labyrinth poems started to appear in greater numbers. In these works Latin was occasionally combined with Polish.

But it was at the end of the seventeenth century that the pattern forms most fully flourished. This period is the pinnacle of the culture developed by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry (*szlachta*) and called "Sarmatism". But it is also a time of slow decline for the democracy of the gentry. Some forms of *poesis artificiosa*, such as anagrams or echo poems, found their place in the political poetry created prolifically in these difficult and unstable times. They were sometimes connected with conventional poems auguring good fortune for the successive kings. In 1669 when Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki ascended to the throne, Marcin Kuczwarczewicz published in Warsaw *Prognostica optativa serenissimo Michaeli Dei gratia Poloniarum regi*, composed in a eulogistic style, where one can find the following anagrams (Kuczwarczewicz 1699: f. A3v):

IN MICHAELE  
LECHI MENIA  
habebunt  
CUM MICHAELE  
eveniant  
MECVM LECHIA  
rex serenissime  
tibi sibi que  
optat et precatur.

The poets from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth seemed to have been less eager to compose rebuses than their colleagues from the German regions of Europe. There were also relatively few permutation poems.

When poring over the Old Polish volumes of *poesis artificiosa*, I cannot but note that here too theoretical reflection was a couple of steps behind practice. *Poesis artificiosa* started to receive more attention in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth only at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> These forms were grouped by the theorists into such categories as *epigrammata artificiosa*, *carmina artificiosa* or *ludus poeticus*.<sup>18</sup> It bears stressing that such theoretical reflections were formulated mainly for the

17 Cf. Michałowska 1974: 139.

18 Michałowska 1974: 139–140.

purpose of school education. Their authors, usually teachers themselves, registered the exercises they used for teaching their students in order to pass to the next generations worthy examples of speaking and writing, including the composition of *poesis artificiosa*. Their students, in turn, competed with one another and strived to compose poems according to what they were taught; their attempts were subsequently included in textbooks of poetics. As a result, these texts on the one hand registered existing phenomena and on the other offered new models for composing *poesis artificiosa*. Panegyrics and religious poems composed in accordance with the rules were selected, analyzed, and presented by the teachers as examples to follow.

The basic idea of *poesis artificiosa* was that it involved the reader in an interactive play, in which he or she had to prove his or her ability to extract sense from intricate structures. Thus it is difficult to disagree with the critics who claim that most of the poems created in that fashion present themselves as merely more or less sophisticated and creative brain twisters, testing the reader's ability to solve them but possessing little literary value. Nevertheless, according to the Polish scholar Dorota Gostyńska (1991: 101), such games were not, or at least not always, an entirely vain entertainment. On the contrary, they often depended on deep insight into the meaning of language and words, which needed to be chosen carefully so as to make them harmonize with the content. Unusual word orders forced the reader to focus on their sense, and provoked him or her to ponder seemingly obvious assumptions about them, assumptions that, as it often turned out, were not so obvious. Nonetheless, it is difficult to deny that renowned authors of these times reached for these forms only sporadically. Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595–1640), a Jesuit and the court preacher of the king Władysław IV Vasa, was famous for his Neo-Latin poetry throughout Europe, and although he criticized anagrams,<sup>19</sup> his poems reflect some of the fashionable trends. In his epigram *In stemma eiusdem [Ioannis Caroli Chodkiewicz]*: “W.”, *litteram duodecimam inversam* the repetition of the letter M and the twice repeated V, which are highlighted in print, allude to a graphic element of the Abdank coat of arms used by Chodkiewicz, which resembles the letter M turned upside down.<sup>20</sup>

A form which reached the height of popularity in the seventeenth century and whose creators showed a particular sensitivity to the visual aspect

19 Sarbiewski 1958: 19: *Haec vulgo anagrammata vocantur atque a quibusdam plus nimio celebrantur. Quare mirari eos convenit, qui puerilibus hisce nugis excruciant ingenia et nescio quos eculeos quaestionesque in libera indole experiuntur.*

20 Sarbiewski 2003: 76. See Piskala 2009: 227–228.

of the text was the elogium.<sup>21</sup> It was practiced not only by amateur poetasters, but also by such great individuals known for their sophisticated artistic tastes and enlightened minds as Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski. Allusions to heraldic emblems, the care for the graphic layout of the Latin text, varied fonts, a variety of literary devices including antithesis, anaphora, epiphora, etymological figures and paranomasia – all of this makes his *Adverbia moralia* a unique work, yet one that at the same time responds to the artistic postulates of the second half of the seventeenth century (Lubomirski 1995: 139–141):

ADVERBIUM I  
 AD  
 Ad vos loquor,  
 O, mortales,  
 qui ad cognitionem conditionis  
 Humanae,  
 velut mutaturi ad fontem NARCISSI,  
 imo  
 Speculatores propriae vilitatis  
 ad Speculum laboriosae miseriae animo  
 acceditis.  
 En  
*Primus ad vitam accessus*  
*Sufficiens ad mortem gradus*  
 Est.  
 Non Prius  
 Ad Lucem quam ad Luctum,  
 ad intuitum quam ad planctum  
 oculos aperimus,  
 Infelicesque,  
 ad omne malum Nati  
 Per lacrimarum fluctus ad miseriarum mare  
*devehimur.*

From among the writers of the first half of the eighteenth century it is easy to distinguish those who were especially fond of *poesis artificiosa*. Their poems were usually grouped in cycles and passed down to us as such. It often happened that such a cycle was the only literary output of the author. A typical volume of *poesis artificiosa* was opened by an elaborate title formula and a chronogram encrypting the publication date. The dedication was preceded by a poem on the patron's coat of arms, i.e. stemma, which sometimes also took on a pattern form. The poems coming next may have belonged only to one type or may have been varied. Homogeneous marks, e.g., the works of the Franciscan Ludwik Miske, who specialized in

21 See Otwinowska 1990.

chronograms. On the other hand, Krzysztof Klimecki, a reformed Franciscan monk, was known for his anagrams made up of the Latin text of the Hail Mary, though his poems also included acrostics. The books of Klimecki's anagrams were repeatedly published in Zamość and Lviv in 1690–1696.

Chronograms or anagrams repeated again and again page after page could leave a reader bored from the sheer monotony. E.g., Bartłomiej Kazimierz Malicki, a doctor of philosophy and professor at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, composed a volume praising the bishop of Lutsk, Bogusław Leszczyński. His compilation, entitled *Centuria anagrammatico-epigrammatica* (Malicki 1688), contains one hundred Latin epigrams building on anagrams created from the bishop's name. Somewhat more imagination can be ascribed to Marian Sikorski, who was the author of, among other things, a panegyric with the tautogrammatic title *Fasces Franciae floribus floridi* written in tribute to Jan Jabłonowski (Sikorski 1737), which included a tautogram, a labyrinth, *cancrini* and rebus verses. The volume ends with a labyrinth composition (Sikorski 1737: f. F2v):

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |   | S |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   | S | I | S |   |   |   |
|   |   | S | I | N | I | S |   |   |   |
|   | S | I | N | I | N | I | S |   |   |
| S | I | N | I | I | F | I | N | I | S |
|   | S | I | N | I | N | I | N | I | S |
|   |   | S | I | N | I | S |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | S | I | S |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   | S |   |   |   |   |   |

Religious poetry too showed more variety, including such forms as crosses or stars in poems dedicated to Mary. Among these are the books of Maurycy Kielkowski: in his series of poems dedicated to Saint Anthony and entitled *Hypomnema Franciscanum* (Kielkowski 1718) he included such forms as acrostics, chronograms, anagrams, a poem in the shape of an obelisk, a musical rebus, a labyrinth, a grid poem, visual poems in which lines of writing are used to draw images, and *versus rapportati* (known also as “correlative verses”: in these the subsequent words of one verse correspond to the subsequent words of the following verse, so that the poem can be read also vertically). The volume is crowned with an ingenious riddle, whose solution is the letter M (*coronis aenigmatica*; Kielkowski 1718: f. G1v):<sup>22</sup>

Non existo creatura, haud existo Creator,  
Inter viventes non fueram, capior

22 See Milewska-Ważbińska 2006: 231–232.

Inter mortiferos, fateor, sum mortua semper  
 Inque sepultura non queo habere locum.  
 Sum Domini mediatrix, ast aspernor honores;  
 Cum regnum capio, displicet aula mihi:  
 Mundi sum princeps, ignis me, tellus et unda  
 Non videt ac aer: sto tamen in medio  
 Ipsa elementorum; perfundor tempore quovis,  
 Palpebris propriis non tamen aspicio.  
 Praesens me nec habet, nec praeterito atque futuro  
 Haesi, non nascor, debeo prima mori:  
 Sum cum daemonibus, me nunquam cernit Avernus,  
 Laetor in Empyreo nonque beata vocor.

Among the *poesis artificiosa* created within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the poems referring to the heraldic emblems of the nobility have a particularly prominent position. Sarbiewski's poem alluding to the Abdank coat of arms was already mentioned. Ludwik Miske published a poem on the coat of arms of Wojciech Waśniewicz, the canon of Gniezno and Poznań (Miske 1725). The coat of arms of the Waśniewicz family consisted of three roses and two half-moons. Both the title and the six hexameter verses have the date 1725 encoded in them (Miske 1725: f. A1v):

In aVItVM perILLVstrIs patronI DeCVs  
 TerrIs atqVe poLIIs fert DVpLeX CYnthIa Mores,  
 Ferre eX se rores, LVCEm bLanDosqVe faVores.  
 Et Rosa VlrVtIs CVnctIs DiffVnDIt oDores,  
 TrIpLICItter fLorens VIVos habet VnDIqVe aMores.  
 FaC DeVs! Vt LVnae pLenae eXtent seMper honore  
 PVrpVreosqVe RosaM eXornent CanDore Coronae.

The works of literary history written in the nineteenth and twentieth century are definitely dominated by negative assessments of the Old Polish *poesis artificiosa*. None of its forms met with approval from Hieronim Juszyński, the author of the *Dictionary of the Polish Poets* (*Dykcjonarz poetów polskich*) published in 1820. The above cited palindrome by Niegoszewski is according to the author of the *Dictionary* not much more than a "proof of laborious toil".<sup>23</sup> *Technopaegnon* by Mikołaj Lubomirski "testifies to a daunting and useless work".<sup>24</sup> Anagrams by Bartłomiej Kazimierz Malicki are "a great work, and an even greater waste of time".<sup>25</sup> And when discussing the work of Krzysztof Klimecki, Juszyński says that only in the periods "when wit was wasted on such inventions was such paltry work admired", whereas today it only serves as a proof of the toil and patience of the au-

23 Juszyński 1820: 2.7.

24 Juszyński 1820: 1.255.

25 Juszyński 1820: 1.174.

thor.<sup>26</sup> The above quoted Maurycy Kielkowski was no more successful in earning Juszyński's approval for his religious poetry.<sup>27</sup>

Teresa Michałowska, in her recent assessment of Old Polish pattern poetry, declared that its authors "propagated an intellectually empty model of art, art devoid of idealistic values and at the same time bound by technical rules" and pointed out "the low level of artistic culture" of these times.<sup>28</sup> It is hard to deny that most of the *poesis artificiosa* of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, created by inept poets, would not stand the test of time. But it might be worth pondering why this type of literature had, in the times when it was created, such a great power and appeal. Should we not, when thinking of this poetry, keep in mind the similarity between these meticulously composed poems and those meant to amaze the reader without employing linguistic games, as well as with illusionistic and anamorphic painting, so popular in the Baroque period? After all, to astound and stir the audience was a common aim of all the forms of artistic expression of this time. It stems from the Baroque theory of the Concept, understood as a way of handling the topic with the use of various forms of artistic expression.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. *Poesis artificiosa* and Art

*Poesis artificiosa*, along with emblematics and iconology, is a characteristic feature of the culture of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. Behind the creation of any such hybrid forms combining word with image and sound there lay a search for a universal means of expression. The Baroque culture of display, dominated as it was by symbol and metaphor, provided additional motivation for this search.<sup>30</sup> In this period, the word, both written and spoken, was always accompanied by a visual and musical frame. On the other hand, the shape of this old culture can be explained in terms of psychology – since emotions can be expressed more fully with the aid of image and sound rather than by bare words – and of sociology – as the artist and his or her audience belonged to the circle of the similarly educated elites. This education provided them with an access code to the encrypted messages of *poesis artificiosa*. This poetry was mainly a domain of schools and universities, but also belonged to particu-

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26 Juszyński 1820: 1.171.

27 Juszyński 1820: 1.169.

28 Michałowska 1990: 636.

29 Gostyńska 1991: 99.

30 Cf. Plotke 2009: 161–167.

lar social and religious circles. Hence its popularity among the graduates of the Jesuit colleges as well as protestant and orthodox schools, mostly coming from the nobility but also rich burghers from Gdańsk or Toruń, and among the graduates of the Mohyla Academy in Kyiv.

The range of *poesis artificiosa* extended beyond books – printed or handwritten. Chronograms and acrostics were for instance used in the art of making medallions. The obverse of the medallion of Wrocław signed by Johan Kittel<sup>31</sup> and minted to commemorate the victory of the joint European forces over the Turks in the battle of Vienna in 1683 shows a double sun with a sash above it on which the phrase SOLE DUPLO and a moon are engraved, below which an anagram reads PLUS DOLEO. The name of the German emperor that accompanies these anagrams also serves as their base: LEOPOLDUS. The inscription on the reverse ends with words containing a chronogram that encodes the year 1683: *eX Insigni hoC fortitVDInIs et persIstentIae eXeMpLo*. Both the graphic and the verbal elements appearing on this medallion were supposed to suggest to the audience the greatness of the victory. The chronogram and the anagrams included in the inscription were meant to stress its miraculousness.

Such elaborate forms were also used in architecture. The façade of the Łazienki Palace in Warsaw, which belonged to Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski in the seventeenth century, has the following distich inscribed on it:

Haec domus odit amat fundit commendat et optat  
Tristitias pacem balnea rura probos.

Similar structures (*versus rapportati* or *correlativi*) were used in the seventeenth century in inscriptions on various buildings throughout Europe: an inscription resembling the one quoted above is inscribed, *inter alia*, on the town hall in Delft.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. Figuring Death

*Poesis artificiosa* also found its way into funeral verse. At the Lubrański Academy in Poznań an *Epicedion* was published as a tribute to a deceased teacher, Wojciech Dembicki. The brochure includes poems by the late teacher's students and colleagues, among which are a poem in the shape of a pyramid (fig. 4) and an echo poem that begins as follows (*Epicedion* 1618: f. B3r.):

31 Raczyński 1838: 310.

32 *Haec domus odit, amat, punit, conservat, honorat: | Nequitiam, pacem, crimina, iura, probos*. Cf. Walther 1964: no. 10552.



Cur infers violenta manus? cur infligis ictus  
 Aevo florenti Parca Dembiccio? *E.* Io  
 Plaudis ovans et psallis Io cur perfida? *E.* fida.

The last four poems of his funeral cycle are chronograms giving the year of Dembicki's death.

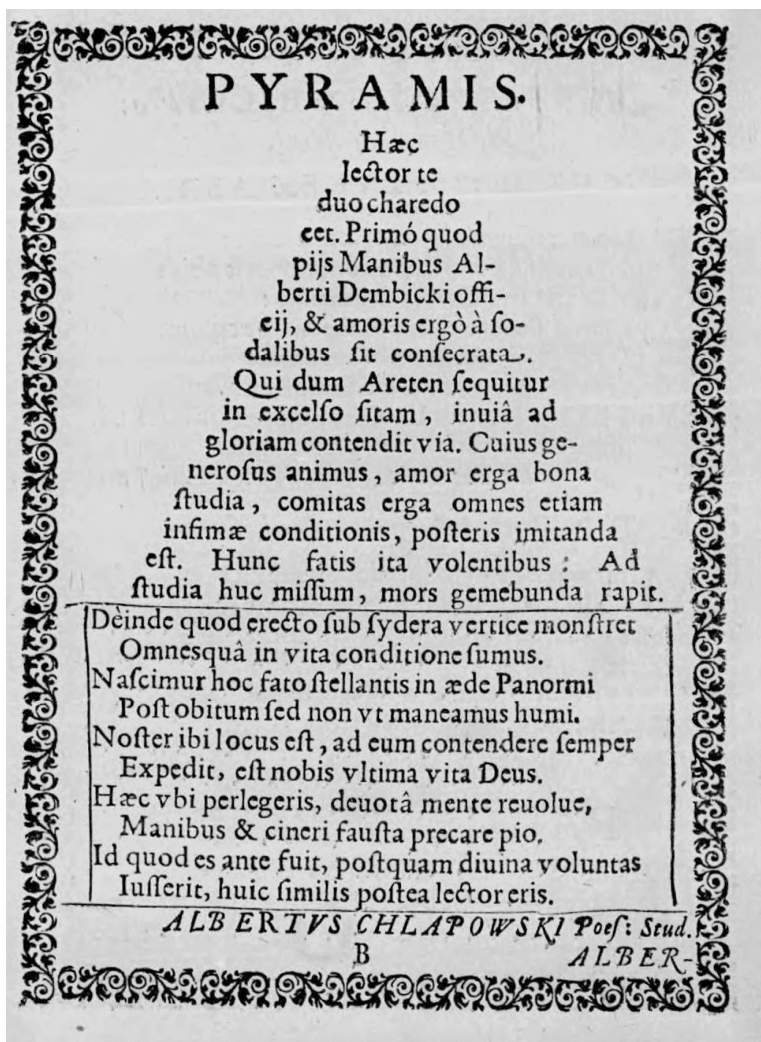


Fig. 4: A poem in the shape of a pyramid. In *Epicedion* 1618: f. B1r.  
<http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/publication/31937> (accessed August 2012)

Jan Wojciech Janicki is the author of a funeral volume written on the death of the starost of Lviv and Field Clerk of the Crown, Adam Hieronim Sieniawski. Here we find a funeral poem written in dactylic hexameters which contains an acrotelesteic. The first and last letters of the verses spell out the name, official titles and functions of the deceased, although this is not an *acrostichon purum*, and in several verses the neighbouring letters were also used: ADAMVS HIERONIMUS A GRANOV SIENIAVSKI IN SZKLOV ET MISSA COMES, NOTARIVS CAMPESTRIS REGNI LEOPOLIENSIS CAPITANEVS SAT VIXIT (Janicki 1650: f. A4r–B1v).

The correspondence of word and image in the funeral ceremony and in brochures published on such occasions made it easier to depict the crossing of the line between life and death and to teach the reader to accept the latter. *Poesis artificiosa* was intended to inspire the mourners to a deeper reflection on the reality of human existence, showing on the one hand the relationship between sensory perception and intellectual cognition, and that between body and soul on the other. Thus this poetry served not only a mimetic but also a cathartic function. The artists attempted to represent the human condition and the world in its complexity as well as to aid the cleansing of the souls of their audience.

## 5. Visual Reading

These examples of funeral works seem to be the most telling illustration of the fact that *poesis artificiosa* is always visual poetry, to be situated in a space shared by logosphere and iconosphere. A focus on the visual aspect of writing enhanced the linguistic message, but also fulfilled the artistic ambitions of the authors and their audiences. The full appraisal of such a literary work demanded not just a linear reading but also an appreciation of the text's spatial dimension. Different pattern forms were vehicles for different types of information, but regardless of the form chosen, there is always a visual component that is a vital part of the form's communication. Chronograms and anagrams may belong to the logosphere, whereas visual poems belong rather to the iconosphere, yet one cannot but notice that chronograms are also, in a way, a visual form – or to put it more precisely, logovisual. To read poems that included e.g. acrostics without paying attention to the first letters of the lines was to deprive them of their additional sense; reading chronograms likewise required careful awareness of their visual layout. In the case of *carmina figurata* the literary message is complex and words and image are in a particularly close relationship: they complete each other, shed light on one another and enrich each other with an additional meaning. Experiencing such a twofold text without reflecting

on its visible layout, although sometimes possible, was definitely incomplete. Among the visual poetic forms created in the sixteenth and seventeenth century we find both those that only stressed the semantic value of the text and were meant to complete its meaning, and those that must have been treated as the key to the interpretation of the whole.<sup>33</sup>

The authors of the second half of the eighteenth century gradually lost interest in the various sub-genres of *poesis artificiosa*. In the second half of the nineteenth century figure poems started to serve mainly parodistic and humoristic functions.<sup>34</sup> Yet a renewed interest in visual poetry for the many possibilities of artistic expression it offered is connected with the avant-garde and futuristic movement in the literature and art of the first decades of the twentieth century. In Poland, Tytus Czyżewski, a painter and poet from the futuristic circles, was known for his visual poetry. It may be noted in passing that the most famous modern author of such poetic experiments, Guillaume Apollinaire, though he wrote in French, was descended from a Polish aristocratic family. One of the greatest Polish poets of the twentieth century, Julian Tuwim, was also a great connoisseur of literary curiosities and linguistic games, and authored a collection of them bearing the title *Pegaz dęba – Pegasus Rears* (Tuwim 1950). In his popular poems for children he put to practical use many devices typical of the playful literature which he collected. More recently, Tuwim's activity both in anthologizing and in composing this poetry that may be described as belonging to the tradition of *poesis artificiosa* has found a continuator in Stanisław Barańczak, a virtuoso poet and prolific translator of English-language literature. The poet considered to be the father of concrete poetry in Poland is, however, Stanisław Dróżdż (1939–2009), and this sort of poetic activity still attracts many enthusiasts among contemporary authors, who endeavour to express in their poetry the complex essence of reality.

The fact that concrete poetry is deliberately ambiguous and multi-dimensional is supposed to reflect the limited and subjective human perception of reality. In many cases, just as it was in the seventeenth century, the poet's preoccupation seems to be with form rather than content. However, it might be worth pondering whether these visual messages may not at times speak more clearly than a linear text could to audiences whose perception of reality is shaped by the constant influence of the modern iconosphere. After all, the experience of such poetry today may not be much different from that had by the participants in the Baroque culture of display, as they discovered a poetry embodied in new forms demanding not only to be read, but to be *viewed* with careful reflection.

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33 Dziechcińska 1987: 90.

34 Martuszevska 2007: 45.

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